USHJA Joint Amateurs Task Force Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2019 – 3:30 pm ET via Teleconference

Joint Amateurs Task Force Members Participating: Tracey Weinberg (Chair), Penelope Ayers (Vice Chair), Wendy Chapot Nunn, Courtney Cummings, Adele Einhorn, Karen Freywald, Martha Hall, Rachel Howell, Susan McKinley, Yvetta Rechler-Newman, Ariane Stiegler (11)

Joint Amateurs Task Force Members Not Present: (0)

Also Present: Jennifer Osterman (USHJA Assistant Managing Director of Sport Programs) (1)

I. Welcome and roll call
Ms. Weinberg called the meeting to order and Ms. Osterman performed the roll call; with eleven Task Force members present, a quorum was met.

II. Approval of meeting minutes from March 25, 2019
Ms. Chapot Nunn made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 25, 2019; Ms. Hall seconded and the motion was passed without further discussion.

III. Update on the Safety Ad Hoc
Ms. Weinberg started with an update on the Safety Ad Hoc that there was not a retreat held this summer but they are looking to have a speaker present on safety at the Annual Meeting. Ms. Osterman explained that the Safety Ad Hoc will not be joined with the Amateur Task Force time at Annual Meeting, but they will be present for the Virginia Tech Helmet safety presentation instead. The Task Force feels a little disappointed in that the Safety Ad Hoc has lost momentum on the safety at horse show initiatives. Ms. Ayers discussed that she was in conversation with a steward that they wish to have a safety plan meeting prior to the start of each competition. Ms. Ayers reminded that starting December 1, 2020, competitions will be required to sign an action preparedness plan. Ms. Weinberg gave an example of an accident that happened in Virginia and noted that it took 90 minutes for the rider was able to be taken away in an ambulance. She mentioned that the medics and the ambulance on site was also not fully equipped, and there also not a clear path to get the ambulance to the ring. The situation made it clear that there was no safety preparedness plan in place before the start of the show and the importance of having safety initiatives. There were a couple of other examples given to further the case for a need for more actions toward safety at horse shows. Ms. Osterman explained the purpose of the Virginia Tech helmet presentation as research based on different helmets and their relative safety. She also mentioned that the Safety Ad Hoc is using their meeting time at Annual Meeting for the presentation, and that the Safety Ad Hoc will be waiting to take further action on any rule changes until after action preparedness plan rule has been in place for one full year.
Ms. Weinberg would like to revisit the initial purpose of the formation of the Safety Ad Hoc in that it would be dedicated to improving medical protocol on competition grounds. She mentions that this year the Ad Hoc may have veered off track without any further action during the year. Ms. Weinberg has asked Ms. Osterman to look into the linear track and history of the Ad Hoc. 

*Ms. Ayers made a motion to have more research done on the history and track of the Safety Ad Hoc; Ms. Rechler Newman seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.*

Ms. Osterman gave a reminder to the Task Force about the 2019 USHJA Annual Meeting. Hotel and travel arrangements are available but registration is not yet open. The Amateur Task Force is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 11, from 2:40-4:00pm MT. The Virginia Tech Helmet presentation will be on Monday, December 9 from 2:45-4:00pm MT. The early bird registration fee is $100. The Task Force expressed that they would like to look into getting an earlier time for future conventions.

**IV. Discussion of the Amateur Owner Hunters**

Ms. Weinberg started the conversation by mentioning that the Task Force had made the movement for the 3’3” Amateur Owner Hunter division years ago with the possibility of it affecting the 3’6” division, and she feels that this has occurred. The conversations will be a continuation of discussing the age splits in the efforts to assist the 3’6” section. Ms. Ayers gave example of entries and wait lists for Harrisburg show. She feels that changing the ages might not fix everything, but it may help with the numbers in each section. Ms. Weinberg referenced that Amateur rider data chart that was provided to the Task Force that the numbers decrease with the riders increasing in age. Ms. Osterman mentioned that the USHJA Hunter Work Group (HWG) is also looking at the age splits and is willing to get in touch with the liaison or chair to get more of their thoughts. The Task Force would like to be involved in the conversation with the HWG going forward.

A Task Force member brought forward that it might be beneficial to mirror the 3’ Adult Amateur division with three age groups, and then horse show management would have the option to combine if the entries didn’t fill. A different Task Force member expressed that the age splits should also be applied to the jumper divisions.

Ms. Einhorn suggested that we put out a survey to the amateur membership so that the Task Force can put their efforts into an effective change. Ms. Howell offered that it would also be beneficial to reach out to the trainers of amateur riders who are at the shows and see what is happening regularly. Ms. Weinberg suggested that we can ask for input on an upcoming newsletter that already goes out to the membership to avoid survey costs. Ms. Osterman provided input about doing a targeted email and getting information from members and trainers that way as opposed to a newsletter or survey. It was suggested that in an email to the trainers and include the idea of increasing the junior ages. Another Task Force member suggested using the website Survey Monkey for a more direct and brief questions and avoid open ended answers. Ms. Einhorn suggested that we also ask or survey the members who are in attendance at Annual Meeting. However, the time slot might not yield a lot of attendance and wouldn’t get enough feedback.

Ms. Weinberg summarized the next steps going forward for these topics so that Ms. Osterman will get a better idea on how to accomplish an amateur survey, as well as to speak with the HWG liaison about the amateur age splits and ask that Ms. Weinberg or Ms. Ayers be invited to their next call that would
involves the amateur divisions.
Ms. Howell made a motion to accept the next steps regarding the Amateur hunter divisions; Ms. Chapot Nunn seconded and the motion was unanimously passed.

V. Amateur Sportsmanship Award
Ms. Weinberg explained the Amateur Task Force used to be responsible for reviewing the Amateur Sportsmanship Award, but now the USHJA Awards Committee has taken over that responsibility. The Task Force is still able to submit recommendations of amateur members to be considered for the award. Ms. Weinberg encourages the group to help make these recommendations and help keep the award in place.
A Task Force member suggested that the amateur Brad Wolf be submitted for the award after helping save another rider’s life at a competition earlier this year. Recommendations do not have to come directly from the Task Force, so members can submit multiple names as they see fit. Ms. Osterman looked up and found that the deadline has already passed on July 31, but will look into getting a late submission.

VI. Amateur Jumper Low/Medium/High Specifications
Ms. Weinberg explained that the rule change that was previously passed regarding the Amateur Jumper divisions still allows the heights to fluctuate. In previous conversations, the Task Force would like to see the classes during the week at the lower end of the height range and only the high end during the classics. For example, the Low Amateurs would jump 1.20m during the week and then 1.25m in the classic. The Task Force feels it is important to have very clear language regarding the heights and so that course designers know what to build. Ms. Osterman will provide the Task Force with the current rules and specifications for the next Amateur Task Force call.
The deadline to submit a Rule Change Proposal as a Task Force has already passed, but there is some time for an individual to submit a rule change and it would get referred to the Task Force based on content. Ms. Stiegler offered to review and provide thoughts on the current jumper rule.

VII. Amateur Social Media Influencers
The discussion was opened to the Task Force on whether they feel it is important to address. The definition of an amateur is in the USEF Rulebook GR1307, and there are some amateurs that may be getting compensation for being influencers, such as products and marketing. Ms. Rechler Newman stated that she is against social media influencers. Ms. Howell raises a concern that there are a lot of unenforced rules and that it would be difficult to enforce. The discussion shifted to how the formal protests or complaints with USEF are done.
Ms. Ayers would like for the Task Force to review a letter from two amateur members that was originally sent to Ms. Mary Babick. The amateur letter states that they pay full price for products and then reviews them on social media, which currently does not violate the amateur rules. However, the essence of the rule is that if there is compensation, then you are not an amateur. Ms. Weinberg explained that in other businesses bloggers are hired to provide input on a product or service. Ms. Osterman will provide a copy of the letter on the next Amateur Task Force call, which was decided to be on Monday, September 30 at 4:30pm.
VIII. Old business
   No old business was discussed.

IX. New business
   No new business was discussed.

X. Adjournment
   Ms. Einhorn made a motion to adjourn, and Ms. Ayers seconded the motion. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm (EST).

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Osterman
USHJA Assistant Managing Director of Sport Programs