USHJA HWG Junior Hunter Task Force Meeting Minutes

June 18, 2019 – 4:00 pm EST via Teleconference

Junior Hunter Task Force Members Participating: Christina Schlusemeyer (Chair), Kate Considine (Vice Chair), Tonia Cook Looker, Virginia Edwards, Annette Longenecker, Donald Stewart, Caitlin Venezia-White, Cynthia Williams (8)

Junior Hunter Task Force Members Not Present: Sue Halpern, Mary Babick (Non-voting Advisor) (2)

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

I. Welcome and Roll Call
Ms. Schlusemeyer called the meeting to order and Ms. Osterman performed roll; with eight (8) Task Force members present, a quorum was met.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 2, 2019
Ms. Osterman explained that she could not locate the meeting minutes from April 2, 2019; therefore, she will send them to the Task Force for an email vote as soon as possible.

III. Review of 2020 Junior Hunter National Championship Specifications
Ms. Schlusemeyer invited Ms. Osterman back as the returning liaison for the USHJA Junior Hunter Task Force and asked her to run the call. Ms. Schlusemeyer had to excuse herself from the rest of the meeting for personal matters.
Ms. Osterman explained that the Task Force is to review the specifications sent from USEF regarding the 2020 Junior Hunter Finals, and any suggestions they have will be sent back to USEF in written form. Ms. Osterman opened up floor to the Task Force for recommended changes. Ms. Edwards brought forward the topic of riders being asked to “lead over obstacles” in the Handy Hunter course. Ms. Longenecker referred to the USEF Rulebook, Hunter Chapter HU112.6, and the rule does not reference “leading over obstacles”. The Task Force agrees that if that option is not written in the rulebook, then it should not be an option at the finals. Ms. Osterman confirmed with the Task Force that their recommendation would be to remove the relevant language from section 4.B.2 (Handy Hunter) of the specifications. She also confirmed that the Task Force recommends that the numbering for section 2 (Qualifying) be revised to being with “A”, and not “B”. Lastly, the Task Force recommends that in section 4.B.3 (Classic Round), the word “maintain” be replaced with either “include” or “comprised of”. The Task Force was in agreement on the three suggestions to put forward to USEF for consideration.

IV. Discussion of Junior Hunter Division Splits
Ms. Osterman led the conversation to discuss division splits, and informed the Task Force of an email received from a member regarding this matter and other aspects of the Junior Hunters.
Ms. Edwards took the lead in giving the Task Force a summary of the email that horse shows should offer all four sections of Junior Hunters, and also raises the issue of not regulating riders who compete in the 3’3” section. Ms. Longenecker explained that currently the only restriction is that riders in the 3’3” cannot compete in the Talent Search classes. The issue that is being presented is that riders can compete in the 3’6” Junior Hunters and any other classes held at a higher fence height at one show, but then compete in the 3’3” Junior Hunters at a different show. Riders who are doing this and compete above 3’3” are taking away opportunities for the riders that only compete in 3’3”. This is legal because the shows are two separate licensed events; however, the member and the Task Force agree that this is inappropriate. Ms. Longenecker explained from a show management perspective that it would be very difficult to write a rule to accurately police the classes. There could be a restriction on Junior Hunter Finals that a rider cannot have competed above a certain height during a certain amount of time. The conversation shifted to discussing the need to make it mandatory for horse shows that offer 3’3” should have the four way split at Premiere rated shows. It becomes difficult to explain to exhibitors why some sections are split by age and height when others use a California Split. It was mentioned that if any section were to combine and have at least 12 riders, then a California Split is used.

A member of the Task Force questioned whether the World Champion Hunter Rider (WCHR) program shows were all Premiere horse shows. Ms. Longenecker mentioned that most of them are, but there are a few National rated shows. The discussion went towards the idea that all WCHR and Premiere shows require the four way split for the 3’3” Junior section. Ms. Edwards explained that currently riders who are competing in classes higher than 3’3” are taking points away from riders only competing at 3’3”. There were suggestions that WCHR could put restrictions on the 3’3” Junior Hunter sections points, in addition to requiring the four way split. This concept can be brought forward to the WCHR Committee in written form. Ms. Longenecker offered to reach out to the WCHR Committee liaison and get her input, while Ms. Osterman will prepare a memo to send forward if they are interested in discussing it further.

Ms. Longenecker spoke to the issue of the minimum number of horses required to hold a sub-section of the division. The Pony Hunters and professional Hunter divisions, with the exception of the 3’3” and 3’6” Performance Hunters, only require a minimum of three horses/ponies. If the Junior Hunters could be decreased from a minimum of six horses down to three, then there is a greater chance for all four way splits to run on their own. This would allow riders to compete with their own kind (same age and same height of horse). Additionally, there are typically more ponies competing in the Pony Hunters than there are horses competing in the Junior Hunters at any particular show; therefore, there should be a lower requirement of horses on the less popular division. Ms. Osterman agreed to locate previous year’s Rule Change Proposals and send to the Task Force as a starting point to work toward this change.

V. Discussion of Participation at Junior Hunter Finals
Ms. Osterman provided the Task Force with numbers from the 2018 Junior Hunter Finals, which revealed 628 riders qualified for the 3’3” section with 183 competed (29%), and 505 riders qualified for the 3’6” section with 112 competed (22%). Ms. Osterman asked, on Ms. Schlusemeyer’s behalf, that the Task Force discuss ways to increase the participation numbers. The Task Force members were all in agreement that location of the Finals has a huge impact. The way the classes are managed and possibly making it a requirement for the 3’3” sections to be held in its own ring could help the days run better and provide more incentive for riders to attend. One member of the Task Force brought up that a lot of the riders who have horses qualify for the Finals are only allowed to bring two horses, one at each height. This restriction
could be a large impact on the lower numbers of horses participating in the Finals. It was also mentioned that Pony Finals is deemed a “destination”, whereas Junior Hunter Finals is not for most riders. There is concern for the timing of the classes to be held long into the evening on a Monday and Tuesday, and it has been noticed that some riders will choose to attend a different show for a week rather than the two days because of the schedule. The Task Force also was in agreement that if the 3’3” and 3’6” sections were held in different rings, then they need to have separate judges. This would allow the divisions to run in separate rings at the same time and relieve the schedule. Additionally, the number of judges could be reduced to two. Ms. Osterman agreed to include these suggestions in their memo regarding the 2020 Junior Hunter Finals Specifications for future host requirements to the Finals.

VI. Old Business
No old business was discussed.

VII. New Business
No new business was discussed.

VIII. Adjournment
Ms. Considine made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Longenecker seconded the motion. There being no further business, the meeting ended at 5:01 pm EST.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Osterman
USHJA Assistant Managing Director of Sport Programs