USHJA Young Jumper Task Force Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2020 – 6:00 pm ET via Teleconference

Committee Members Participating: Jason Mc Ardle (Chair), Kirsten Coe, Joe Fargis, Brooke Kemper, Lisa Lourie, Mandy Porter, (6)

Committee Members Not Present: Rachel Bates, Susan Hutchison, Andrew Ramsay, Willie Tynan (4)

Also Present: Jennifer Osterman (USHJA Assistant Managing Director of Sport Programs)
DiAnn Langer (USHJA Show Jumping Technical Advisor) (2)

I. Welcome and Roll Call
Mr. Mc Ardle called the meeting to order and Ms. Osterman performed the roll call; with six (6) members present, a quorum was met.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 3, 2020.
Ms. Kemper made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 3, 2020; Ms. Lourie seconded, the motion was passed unanimously.

III. Discussion of Rule Change Proposals for Young Jumper Classes
Ms. Langer led the conversation with a brief overview of a situation in Ocala, FL during one of the January competitions in which the courses set for the Young Jumper classes were inappropriately set, and riders opted not to compete in the class. Ms. Mary Babick has mandated that the Young Jumper Task Force work to address the issue across all competitions providing unsuitable courses for the young horses. A few inappropriate elements are combinations occurring too soon in the course, difficult tracks that were set for an open class to be run concurrently, jumps set too high, and non-inviting obstacles. Ms. Langer also suggested that the Task Force discuss the idea to have two different height levels within each age group for horses that are either behind or more advanced in their development. She strongly encouraged that the Task Force should aim to communicate the need for proper courses for the development of young horses, as opposed to competition based courses.

Mr. Mc Ardle is in favor to hold the young horse classes separately, as opposed combining open jumper classes held at the same heights designated for a five, six, or
seven year old Young Jumper classes. Ms. Kemper considered that while the tracks of the combined young horse and open classes were the same, they were run at different speeds and formats. She suggested that requiring competition management to hold separate classes would deter them from running them at all due to the small number of young horses competing and the amount of time it would add to run classes separately.

There was continued discussion amongst Task Force members regarding the inappropriate courses seen during the winter circuits in California and Florida. They were all in agreement to aim for better communication with the course designers about the intent and purpose of the young horse courses.

Ms. Coe offered an idea that young horses who may be behind or need to address something in their development can drop down one age group to jump that course but not be placed, riding hors concours. This could eliminate the possibility of having extra classes by implementing high and low sections and still allow riders and trainers to properly develop their horses. It was mentioned that this was an option in other places, and the Thermal circuit was allowing it the last week of their series.

There is an issue regarding the heights for the five year old classes across all competitions, such that the rules state the height can ranges between 1.00m to 1.15m. However, the Task Force was not able to identify a competition where the five year old’s were offered at 1.00m. There were ideas to have ascending courses set throughout the week by having the first class of the show be set at 1.00m and the following classes can graduate to the higher fence height range.

There was a brief discussion about the cost to compete a young horse, and Ms. Lourie noted her apprehension about putting a lot of pressure on competition managers to accommodate. She mentioned that she has experienced benefits with using and being a sponsor of the young horse classes in order to hold managers accountable. It was discussed that we should look to finding ways to make these partnerships with sponsors, course designers, and managers happen.

Ms. Osterman suggested that she will reach out the liaison of the Licensed Officials Committee regarding more young horse information being provided to course designers. Additionally, she will send out a brief Survey Monkey to the Task Force members in order to collect feedback and ideas to address the issues. The Task Force will reconvene next week to review the suggestions and create a plan moving forward.

IV. Old Business

No old business was discussed.
V. New Business
At the beginning of the call, Mr. Mc Ardle mentioned that his client is a sponsor of the Blenheim Equisports West Coast Young Jumper Series. Neither he nor his client has taken part or collaborated with Blenheim’s development of their program. While there is no conflict of interest, he wanted to inform the Task Force of the sponsorship.

VI. Adjournment
Mr. Fargis made a motion to adjourn; Ms. Porter seconded. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM Eastern.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Osterman
USHJA Assistant Managing Director of Sport Programs