

Founding Director and Editor :
 Sylvia Loch (Mrs R G P Hawkins)
 Business Consultant :
 John C Price, FCA
www.classicalriding.co.uk
 Email : crc@classicalriding.co.uk



CRC OFFICE:
 EDEN HALL
 KELSO
 SCOTTISH BORDERS
 TD5 7QD

The Olympics And Classical Dressage

THE FIRST DAY – THE GRAND PRIX TEST

BY SYLVIA LOCH

Well, we did it! Despite all those years of competing as 'also rans', the tears, the doubts, the small successes along the way, we won Gold! First the Team, then the Individual! Who could ask for more? For those non British members, please don't think we are crowing... but it's been a long hard struggle and what makes me very proud is that we saw some really good riding to win that gold and there were several glimpses which looked pretty classical to me.

Now first, let's dismiss any idea that classical means bumbling about with loopy reins. I seem to be forever saying or writing this, but there are still those who do not know the difference between horses in self-carriage that make their own lightness and horses which drop the contact and drop their back. The worst thing about the latter is the fact that a 'disconnected' horse will be uncomfortable in his work. Without the hind legs sufficiently engaged to lift the back, the withers and the forehead, he will be carrying the rider in an unnatural balance. You do not see disconnected horses in the Spanish Riding School!

I was very lucky indeed to be invited to watch the first day of the Dressage at Greenwich. First, I must say what an incredibly beautiful and apt setting this was. How the organisers had managed to fit that arena into such beautiful alignment with the stunning classical buildings of the Royal Naval College, with London's wonderful skyline rearing up behind, was a miracle in itself. It must have taken enormous skill to do so without irrevocably spoiling the park, as so many had gloomily predicted, and it was done with such style, practicality and forethought, it made the whole experience of getting there, most memorable.

The stands were high, and our seats (there were 23,000 in all!) pretty far up, but we could see everything. In addition, we had big TV screens for close ups – such as bits and hands – if one wanted! The whole thing went like clockwork and the hardest thing was keeping up with the marks of the judges – all seven of them! In the end I took notes of what struck me most about each horse and rider and these, short and condensed as they are, form the basis of this article. If I have been over critical here and there, it is not because I am saying I could do it any better (far from it!) – it has only been to separate the wheat from the chaff. I do not think standards will improve without criticism where it is warranted.

The Grand Prix test used on that first day is pretty strenuous. The transitions are all very tricky – not surprisingly at this level – but the lay-out of the test seems in places more designed to catch a horse out than complement the next movement. For example, extended trot is demanded within seconds of the entry down the centre line, whereas some preliminary lateral work first might well have settled the horses and put them more on their hocks to enhance their first lengthening across the diagonal.

I also think it extraordinary that horses are expected to move from extended trot, straight into passage. This happens in Section 6 – MV Extended trot; Section 7 – VKD Passage. This is at odds with the rest of the test where passage is ridden from collected walk or piaffe which makes much more sense. As any trainer knows, collection should always come first to re-balance and restore.

A co-efficient of 2 was given to mark certain movements, eg. the trot half-passes to start, the extended and collected walk – demanded only once – the pirouettes, the canter half-passes to either side of the centre line with a flying change of leg at each change of direction plus the 15 required tempis ridden across the diagonal – all had their marks doubled as a result. Why no co-efficient was given for the rein-back did not make sense, but I have my reasons for thinking this would not have proved popular.



Carl Hester on Uthopia



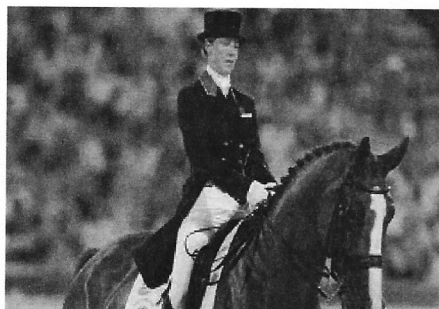
Personally I would have liked to see more walk – such a giveaway of calmness, levelness and correct training – to make the test more balanced in its approach. Although there is the recommended walk on a long rein to leave the arena – for which no marks are given – *hmmm* – I have never understood why this is omitted from the test itself. Horses need a few seconds respite and by including such a movement, judges would be helped to assess the collective marks – i.e. freedom of paces, desire to move forward, submission, lightness and acceptance of the bridle, etc, etc – so much more easily.

As for the piaffe, this is ridden thrice in all and on each occasion 12 to 15 steps are required – a tall order. (One cannot help wonder why so many ... but I digress.) Whilst some combinations made this look relatively easy – e.g. Jacqueline Brooks from Canada with D’Niro looked calm and unstressed (no tail swishing), Fuego (Spain), Rubi (Portugal), Florescu (Morocco) and Coryolano (Ireland) plus the British horses – others did not.

When the test only demands one rein-back and the 5 steps required showed a great deal of resistance with one or two horses going very wide behind – one was bound to see some pretty flaky piaffes. I will not stick my neck out by dwelling too much on the negatives at this point but the main problem was lack of engagement and flexibility behind. Those who managed the piaffe best in my opinion were not necessarily the highest stepping, but those whose horses looked balanced with the forelegs coming down vertically as opposed to those on the forehand, where the front leg slopes back at a sometimes worrying angle. Carl Hester’s Uthopia was one of the few horses who piaffed correctly and there was a lot to like in Ireland’s Coryolano ridden by Anna Merveldt.

The pirouettes seemed to create fewer problems and some really were almost ‘dinnerplate’ size. It was lovely to see Canada’s Breaking Dawn ridden by Ashley Holzer so calm and relaxed, Richard Davidson’s Artemis tidy and correct and Rubi for Portugal quite exceptional with lovely lowering behind. Even when the rain came down hard, fast and very noisy after lunch, Anna Kasprzak from Denmark did a fantastic job with Dom Perignon as well as David Marcus with Chrevi’s Capital who sadly had to retire through absolutely no fault of his own. (We had all retired by that time under sheets of plastic and umbrellas – many of which blew inside out!)

The passages threw up new problems most of which evolved as a result of some rather obvious tension. It was disappointing to see some very stilted steps from Australia’s Clive ridden by Kristy Oatley, unevenness from Brazil’s Pastor and a real jerkiness in the movement of Anky van Grunsven’s famous Saliniero who must be looking forward to his well deserved retirement. There was a similar scenario with the horse Anky trains for the Spanish team – the stunning Painted Black ridden by Morgan Barbancon-Mestress who despite his huge talent, seemed to snatch up his legs in every step. Unfortunately, the judges’ marks seemed not to reflect these obvious faults and one does worry that big names still enthrall the powers that be. On the positive side there was some lovely work from Finland’s Spirit, Richard and Artemis and Carl and Uthopia. I only wish Charlotte Dujardin had been riding that day as from all accounts, she too was inspiring (I did see her in the Kur on telly!).



Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris

It would take too long and we would run out of space to go over all the different movements one by one, but for sheer gymnasticity, the flying changes, half-passes and extensions were generally stunning. Considering some of the riders relied far too much on the reins, the transitions were mostly good. For harmony there were one or two also-rans to whom I would have given a special rosette. Memorable riders include the 71 year old Hioshi Hoketsu of Japan on Whisper, who rode so quietly. Another combination which looked happy together despite the odd mistake was Jan Ebling’s Rafalco from the USA as well as Sweden’s Don Auriello with Tinne Silfven.

As usual, the elan and verve of Juan Diaz’s riding and the animation of his lovely Fuego was catching and I loved the fact that the Portuguese rider Goncalo Carvalho used hardly any spur. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for Valentina Truppa of Italy, Steffen Peters of the USA or indeed Jessica Michel of France all of whom were busy with their legs for a great

proportion of the time.

The most encouraging aspect of the London Olympics was the fact that there were almost (not yet half... but getting there!) as many riders that I liked rather than disliked. Riding position seemed much improved; there were fewer nodding heads, more people sat in the vertical – which clearly helped their horses – and as a result did not ride ‘against’ the rein. Those seats which really disturbed me were the backward leaning Minna Telde of Sweden and Valentina Truppa of Italy as well as world beater Anky whose unusual movement reminds me of a mechanised doll despite her extraordinary capacity to achieve.

Overall, it was awe inspiring to see what most horses managed to do despite their riders. One or two horses were so pumped up they had to be led into the arena – some even with two people on either side – yet none, surprisingly, refused to come down the centre line. Unfortunately, there were still far too many – including those marked high – who had unsettled mouths, and it was annoying to find the marks did not necessarily reflect this. On the positive side however, it did seem fewer were overbent than the last Olympics or the European Championships I personally witnessed at Windsor. Perhaps gradually, after all the furore caused by *Rollkur*, the message is slowly getting through. Certainly, our winning home team did us very proud on that score and well deserved their medals for their classical approach.

Over the next few days, when I managed to find the right channel on television, I thought how much the new young German team brought to the occasion and I fell in love with Dorothee Schneider’s black mare Diva Royal in the Kur with an almost perfect rendition of the Black Swan from Tchaikovsky. That was very special and close to those breathtaking and very correct performances by Charlotte and Carl. Congratulations must go to Laura Bechtolsheimer for containing her very powerful Mistral Hojris (Alf) so expertly and doing us proud and many congratulations to our sponsors Albion for providing her with her beautiful saddle and for 12 years of sponsorship.*

Like many of you, I was disappointed with the silver medal winner in the Individual purely on account of the rider’s hands and the contact into which she rode her gorgeous horse. For that reason I felt Team GB was cheated of another medal – but you can’t change the world overnight.

My hope for the future is that more and more riders and trainers will realise how much the public dislike seeing horses pulled in and over ridden. To this end, all judges including those at the top of their tree, must learn to be braver and mark down any sign of tension and distress. By and large, good classical horsemanship was rewarded in the final stages, with the right team winning... but until judges have the courage to show real discrepancy in the marks between those who adhere to the FEI rules and those who don’t – the discipline still has some way to go.

**Laura was riding in an Albion SLK Royale*

Charlotte Dujardin
and Valegro



Weight Aids Clinic

Sylvia is running an unmounted Weight Aids Workshop on Saturday 3rd November at 10am until 12pm, indoors at Eden Hall, Kelso.

These popular training sessions are conducted to improve rider tone and balance with particular emphasis on how we use the seat and back in our general riding. Through practical exercises on the ground, students are shown how to apply weight aids for each and every movement performed on horseback. From simple circles, transitions, canter departs to lateral work, counter canter, changes and more collected work; your “sense of feel” will be hugely enhanced.

Tickets available on a first come, first served basis by sending a SAE to Eden Hall, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 7QD. Tickets are priced at £22.50 per person including refreshments. Please wear trainers!

A Review of the Olympic Dressage

by Stephen Clarke

© MICHAEL J. STEVENS – SEPTEMBER 2012

On the evening of 2nd September at the TTT in Surrey, Stephen Clarke gave his first review of the Dressage at the London 2012 Olympic Games, where he officiated as president of the ground jury.

Stephen's first comment was that the winning horses had been beautifully trained and that we in the UK should be proud. He has always been proud of the way we ride in the UK and the results prove that all the years of correct training have at last reaped rewards. He thought some luck was involved too, in that we had several horses peaking at the same time and the timing was just right for an Olympics in the UK.

The organisation at the Games was brilliant. They insisted that he fly in to Heathrow, where he was met and escorted on foot or driven to wherever he needed to be. He praised the helpful attitude of all the volunteers, which helped everything to run very smoothly. One minor problem arose at the beginning when his driver got lost and he was the only judge to arrive late!

Stephen mentioned the precision timing. The test entrances were organised precisely with someone counting down the seconds; and in the case where there was a prolonged resistance someone was there counting it to the second.

There was a reason for having teams of three riders rather than four, and it has to do with the fact that the IOC allows only a maximum of fifty horses to compete in dressage. It is the spirit of the Olympic movement that as many nations as possible should be able to compete and the only way to cater for this was to cut down the team sizes. The disadvantage is that if any one rider of the team is eliminated (as happened with Canada) then the whole team is out. Stephen thought there would have been an outcry if this had happened to the Dutch or British teams, and there needs to be pressure put on the IOC to allow more horses to start in future.

Where there is an initial provisional mark announced for a test, followed by a confirmed score, the adjustment is made by a supervisory panel. This consists of three people, two 5* FEI judges (here, one Dutch and one German) and a trainer (David Hunt). The reason for the panel is that sometimes a judge's view is such that he cannot see if (say) a flying change is short behind and this will show up as when this judge gives a high score and all the others give a lower one. The panel adjust the anomalous mark to match the others. Similarly one of the judges might mis-count the number of tempi changes shown and again the panel would make a correction. The panel are not allowed to tamper with the judgement in any way, so if say one judge gave a ten for an extended trot and another gave a six they would not be able to make a change. They cannot alter the collective marks. The panel watch from a screen and they have video playback. They do a good job. At a press conference after three days of tests, it was revealed that fifty nine scores had been adjusted by the panel, which sounds a lot, but in fact it was only a small proportion of the total of 18942 scores.

Stephen showed one of Carl Hester's rides on a big screen and, to explain why he hadn't been higher up the scoreboard, he pointed out some of the weaknesses: there wasn't much over-track in the extended walk which needed more relaxation and swing (score 6), the trot half-passes lacked cadence, and the canter half passes could spring more from the ground with more expression. The piaffe could have more hind leg activity. Good points were that the horse was very regular and the transitions were clear and accurate. He thought Carl rode a safe test for the sake of the team.

Desperado's test (Kristina Sprehe Germany) was then displayed. When the horse suddenly lurched forwards, this was counted as a resistance and resulted in an "insufficient" score for the movement. This horse showed a piaffe which Stephen said could have more hind leg activity and he marked it as "fairly good". He didn't comment on the fact that the forelegs were sloping noticeably backwards with the horse appearing to be on the forehand. Stephen commented on the size of the canter pirouettes but said nothing about the very distinct four-beat gait that this horse produced.

Stephen proceeded to give very brief answers to some written questions:

- The stewards check all horses to see that the bit is correct and there is no evidence of any damage.

- When horses are behind the vertical the judge must consider the whole picture not simply the outline.
- The Portuguese rider's horse Rubi lost marks for being behind the vertical and not always into the bridle, but Stephen gave him a ten for his piaffe. His walk had a low score as it was not over-tracking and he needed more impulsion. In the freestyle he lost marks for showing an excessive amount of piaffe in comparison to other exercises, and the design of his test was not symmetrical.
- The warm-up is heavily policed, very carefully watched and covered by CCTV. Patrik Kittel would have been yellow carded if the rollkur example published in the press had not been of a short duration. Stephen felt sorry for the stewards as they had a difficult job dealing with some of the personalities and he thought they did a good job.
- Regarding tail-swishing, the judge will try to pinpoint the reason for it rather than just noting the symptom but it will result in a loss of marks.
- The judges never pre-judge a horse and they do not take into account anything they have read in the press about the horse's training. They judge only what they see before them.
- Half marks can give more accuracy but Stephen worried that they might not work so well with less experienced judges at the lower levels.
- Standards have improved over the years, hence the higher scores being achieved. This is helped by the fact that better horses are available these days and riders have access to horses that find the job easier. Horses now have more impulsion and are carrying themselves in a correct way. In other sports the marks get close to 100% but this won't happen where horses are involved as they always do something wrong.
- Stephen hates rollkur and the fact that amateurs imitate it. He is pleased that people are already trying to imitate the way UK riders ride.
- Stephen has never had anyone try to influence his judging, but there are pressures involved, such as knowing that awarding a 10 or a 9.5 can make a difference to which rider gets the gold medal. Debby Lush who was in another judges' booth thought that the foreign judges felt pressure from the audience.

The evening ended with the freestyle tests of Laura Bechtolsheimer, Adelinde Cornelissen and Charlotte Dujardin being screened and Stephen making comments. Apart from a mistake in the two-time changes, Laura lost marks because her horse looked strong and she was half halting almost every stride. Her interpretation of the music could have been better. Stephen awarded her a ten for one piaffe. He thought the horse went better in Kentucky.

Adelinde's test had a higher degree of difficulty than Charlotte's and her horse's walk was better. She interpreted the music beautifully and made no mistakes. Against that, the neck was shortened in the extended trot, the horse was often against the hand, the mouth was sometimes open and the jaws slightly crossed.

Charlotte got a 10 for her extended trot, the harmony, carriage and correctness were all excellent, though there could have been more impulsion. The "mistake" near the end of her test was a momentary lapse in a transition rather than a fault in a movement and so it affected the score for harmony. Charlotte and Adelinde were very close in their scores but in the end Charlotte won because the harmony of her test was better.



CRC DRESSAGE DAY
to be judged by Francis Peto & Sylvia Loch



SUNDAY 28TH OCTOBER 2012 at
EDEN HALL, KELSO, ROXBURGHSHIRE, TD5 7QD

A Competition Dressage "Friendly" judged under The Classical Riding Club Rules
Approx 10:00am - 3:00pm to be performed in an all weather outdoor 20x40m arena

CRC dressage focuses on how you and your horse work as a partnership. Under CRC rules you are not judged movement by movement; instead our CRC Judges will concentrate on marking each individual aspect, e.g. forwardness, balance, rhythm, general obedience etc. Correct Riding is marked in separate sections; which gives you a real chance to shine even if your horse is not a "competition type". Harmony between horse and rider is highly marked; over-bending and force is marked down. If you'd like to know more send for a copy of our Judges' Guidelines "Making A Difference" (only £2.50). Rules allow more freedom, with biting, saddles and talking to your horse etc!

Please send a large SAE to CRC Dressage, Angela Hinnigan, 72 Bowmont Street, Kelso, TD5 7EF for a copy of the Schedule or see www.classicalriding.co.uk