



Eventing

Eventing is the most complete combined competition discipline recognised by the FEI where men and women compete as equals in both individual and team events. It demands of the competitor considerable experience in all branches of equitation and a precise knowledge of the horse's ability and of the horse a degree of competence resulting from intelligent and rational training. It covers every aspect of horsemanship: the harmony between horse and rider that characterise Dressage; the contact with nature, stamina and extensive experience essential for the Cross Country; the precision, agility and technique involved in Jumping.

Eventing is one of the three disciplines in competition at the Olympic Games, the other two being Jumping and Dressage.

Some history

Eventing originated with the military. The purpose was to create a competition in which officers and horses could be tested for any challenges that could occur on or off duty. It also provided a basis to compare training standards between the cavalries of different countries.

The first modern Eventing competition was held at the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm (SWE). It lasted five days and the order in which the tests were run was quite different from today's. Speed and endurance came first, followed by a rest day; then took place the steeplechase, jumping and dressage.

Modern competition

There are two types of modern competitions: with or without steeple chase in the Cross Country phase.

Format with steeple chase

This competition comprises three distinct tests: **Dressage**, **Cross-Country** and **Jumping**. They take place on separate consecutive days during which a competitor rides the same horse throughout.

- **Dressage Test**
After an opening veterinary fitness inspection, a Dressage test is performed, the object of which is the

harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse. The test consists of a series of compulsory movements at walk, trot and canter gaits, within a rectangular arena 60 m. long and 20 m. wide.

To perform a good Dressage test, the horse needs to be flexible and fluid. To keep the strong Eventing horses under the firm control required by the exacting Dressage movements involves great knowledge and understanding. Although Eventing Dressage, even at the highest level, is not as demanding as pure Dressage, it is often difficult to get a good test out of a horse that has undergone lengthy preparation involving a lot of fast work. Trotting around obediently in circles is as frustrating for many horses as it is for some riders.

Each competitor's good marks (from 0 to 10 for each numbered movement and for each of the collective marks) awarded by the judges are converted into penalty points. They are recorded for inclusion in the final classification. A good Dressage test lays the foundation for the rest of the competition and horses that are found wanting in this phase face an uphill struggle to get up amongst the prize-winners.

- **Cross-Country Test**
The focus of the entire event is on the Cross-Country test, the objective of which is to prove the speed, endurance and jumping ability of the horse, while at the same time demonstrating the rider's knowledge of pace and the use of his horse. It consists of four distinct phases:

- **Phase A: Roads and Tracks.** This warm-up phase is ridden at a steady trot and riders usually give their horses a canter towards the end of the phase in preparation for the speed required over the chase fences.
- **Phase B: Steeplechase.** This phase was designed to test the speed of horse and rider over jumps and requires horses to jump 8 – 12 brush fences, depending on the level of competition. Even though it is usually carried out at a high-speed gallop, riders have to be accurate judges of pace as horses that finish the steeplechase too quickly will have used up the valuable energy needed for the remaining phases.
- **Phase C: Roads and Tracks.** This is a recovery phase after the exertions of the steeplechase, usually carried out at the walk and trot. It is followed by a ten minute compulsory halt, during which a veterinary check ensures that the horses are sound and fit to continue. Saddlery is also checked at this point.
- **Phase D: Cross-Country.** This is the most difficult part of the test consisting in a course, usually twice the distance of the steeplechase, comprising 30 to 40 Jumping efforts on natural solid obstacles, such as stone walls, woodpiles, water, ditches, etc. The aim is to jump all the fences within the limits of the time allowed. Penalties will be awarded in case the time allowed is exceeded. Each obstacle involves a more difficult, time-saving route and a lengthier alternative. Excessive speed is unwise as the horse will

inevitably run out of steam and have difficulty jumping the more technical fences towards the end of the track.

The four phases are quite independent as far as the timekeeping is concerned and loss of time in one cannot be compensated for by gain of time in another. Exceeding the time allowed in any of the four phases results in penalties. Penalties are also given for refusals and falls of horse or rider. All penalties are added together and recorded for inclusion in the final classification.

The first fall of a horse and second of a rider entails elimination.

- **Jumping Test**

The Jumping test takes place on the last day after a third veterinary (horse) inspection. Riders may voluntarily retire their horses if they seem unfit to continue. This test is run in reverse order of merit and its main objective is to prove that the horses have retained their suppleness, energy and obedience in order to jump a course of 10 to 13 obstacles.

Each competitor's penalties at obstacles are added to the penalties he may have incurred for excess time. They are recorded for inclusion in the final classification. Four penalties for a knockdown or a first disobedience and 8 for a first fall of a competitor can cause a dramatic slide down the classification. Medals, titles and championships can all vanish in an instant during this final test, proving that Eventing horses and riders must excel in all aspects of the discipline if victory is to be achieved.

The winning individual is the competitor with the lowest total of penalty points. The winning team is the one with the lowest total of penalty points, after adding together the final scores of the three highest placed competitors in the team.

Format without steeplechase

These competitions comprise the same three tests, but the Cross Country test does not include Phases B & C. Moreover, phase A, before the Cross Country Obstacle Test, is optional. The event may take place over one, two or three days. The Dressage test always takes place first. Either the Cross Country or Jumping may form the last test. This format

has contributed to developing the sport in countries traditionally less familiar with Eventing and is gradually becoming the standard for the sport at all levels.

Categories and levels of events

Categories indicate the extent of foreign participation in a Three Day Event. The four categories of events are

- **National Three Day Events (CCN)** – limited to national competitors;
- **International Three Day Events (CCI)** – open to competitors from an unlimited number of nations;
- **International One Day Events (CIC)**
- **Championships (CH)** – open to competitors from an unlimited number of nations (e.g. World Championships), but may be confined to a continent or a region.

The levels of difficulty are indicated by stars ranging from One Star (CCI 1*) to Four Star (CCI 4*) for International Three Day Events. Four Star events are open to experienced horses and riders only. Apart from the World and Continental Championships, only the following four venues host annual Four Star CCIs: Badminton (GBR), Burghley (GBR), Kentucky (USA) and Adelaide (AUS).

The levels of One Day Events range from One Star (CIC 1*) to Three Star (CIC 3*).

Equipment

Protective headwear, complying with international standards, when riding on the flat or jumping an obstacle, is compulsory. Boots must be black or black with a brown top. Formal dress, uniforms for the members of the armed and police forces and a hunting jacket, white shirt and tie, gloves, white or cream breeches and boots, are compulsory. Light-weight clothing is appropriate for the Cross-Country and back protectors are recommended.

Safety

Safety has been a longstanding concern of the FEI's. Consequently, a safety programme was put in place, the object of which is to avoid hazards and let only well qualified riders have access to high level championships. In order to enable all parties involved to closely monitor the sport and provide fast and reliable information on the qualification of competitors, a database has

also been developed. A mandatory registration of all horses and riders competing in FEI Eventing competitions was introduced as of 1 January 2003,

Main competitions

The premier Eventing competitions, in which compete both individuals and teams, are

- The **Olympic Games** taking place every four years in a bissextile year. The Games of the XXVIII Olympiad took place in Athens (GRE) in 2004. It was the first time that the format without steeple chase was used.
- The **FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG)** held every four years in the even years between the Olympic Games. The last edition of the WEG was organised in Jerez de la Frontera (ESP) in September 2002. The 2006 FEI WEG will take place in Aachen (GRE) in 2006.
- The biannual **Continental Championships**
- **Continental Games** (e.g. Asian, Pan American Games) and **Regional Games** (e.g. Central American or Caribbean Games), organised under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee and Regional Games Associations.

FEI Eventing World Cup

The FEI Eventing World Cup is a linked series for individuals, the goal of which is to develop the sport throughout the world. It is organised as a three-star level CIC qualifiers and a three-star level Final. It began in August 2002. The 2006 Final will be held in the Swedish city of Malmö.