

An open letter on the status of next year's selection process for the NAJYRC.

by Karen Healey

It was with great surprise, dismay and confusion that we learned of the USHJA's BOD decision to ratify the recommendation of the Jumper Working Group to do away with Zone 10's selection process for the North American Junior Young Riders Championships. (Editor's Note: Read the Gallop, page 10, for the latest on this subject.)



For at least 20 years we have maintained a unique method of selection based on the horse/rider's performance at certain trials. The selection process has evolved over the years to the current format that culminates with a mandatory final trial with head-to-head competition that mimics the conditions they would face at the Championships, including a speed class on the first day, a jump-off class on the second day, a rest day and then a two-round class on the final day.

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Written by Karen Healey
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The fact that the other Zones use prize money won as their criterion has no bearing on the importance and value of the trials system to young riders in Zone 10. In addition to the benefit to the individual riders, it also gives the Zone 10 teams a big head start in developing the camaraderie and team spirit that is so important to a successful team.

Rather than qualifying based on the fastest trailer, certainly not to the benefit of the horse, the trials teach riders to compete under pressure at specific events. And in addressing George H Morris' concern that we are producing show ring riders but not horsemen, the riders and trainers begin to understand the concept of being able to peak at certain times.

Over the years, there have been many riders who only have one horse, a limited budget or perhaps an older horse or one requiring management, any of which may place constraints on how often they can show. The current system allows these riders to compete on an equal footing, and several of them have gone on to win medals.

By using a shorter qualifying period (effectively, mid-March to the beginning of June) rather than a full calendar year, the trials also recognize those horse-rider combinations that are in top form closer to the trials.

As with any process, there have from time to time been issues, sometimes caused by the placement of a single word, but to throw the baby out with the bathwater would be a huge mistake. This year we have 32 horse/rider combinations declared. To take this opportunity away from all these riders because of a competition in Canada that involves four riders in the entire country does not pass the red face test.

The Zone 10 Committee was unanimous in its decision to maintain the trial system that is tried and proven and has been in place for over 20 years. As I understand it, this unanimous decision was never communicated to the Jumper Working Group or the Zone Committees.

There are always a few trainers who complain that the final trial conflicts with the first week of Spruce Meadows, but the majority believes that the benefits of the current system far outweigh the ability to compete at one show (again in Canada). If a rider has the resources to travel to Florida for WEF, they would only miss one of three or four preliminary trials, which include a discard score.

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The previous Zone 10 Jumper Committee was more than willing to entertain alternate dates, including bringing the final trials forward, but a solution that satisfied everyone was never found. Similarly, a solution involving wild card spots could be entertained.

The bottom line is this: This change was pushed through by a few people with a personal agenda with a blatant disregard for the vote of the Zone 10 committee. As the specs for the Zones aren't due until July, we respectfully ask the Board of Directors to reconsider its vote and let the voices of those who have been the most successful at NAJYRC be heard.