President’s Letter

On behalf of the IAEJ bureau, I would like to wish a nice Olympic year, for you, your families and your professional activities.

This year many of you will be focusing on the Olympic Games in Hong Kong. Not since Moscow in 1980 has the equestrian community not been geographically part of the Games which will be held this time in Beijing. It will be for sure a special atmosphere. The Hong Kong Jockey Club, which is hosting the equestrian events, is doing its best to make it unforgettable. The way it has organised a few press trips (I was on one of them) to prepare our community for the Games was also unique. A special thanks also to Bob Howlett and Mark Pinkstone in Hong Kong.

We have already focussed on the Olympic Games as we tried our best regarding the accreditation process. We were supposed to work hand in hand with the FEI as in the past. In the end, the process of accreditation for specialized press and the special quota allowed by the IOC, went fine despite the fact it was handled unilaterally by the FEI. We expressed our concern on this situation through a letter to the President Princess Haya. The letter we received in return raises some fundamental questions and options about our membership that we should discuss in our following meetings.

Regarding this point and the agenda, the 2008 IAEJ General Assembly is planned in Hong Kong. Sub-meetings are being schedule for the World Cup Finals in ’s-Hertogenbosch and Gothenburg as well as during and the Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event for members to discuss current items of focus.

This brings us back to the internet. As you may have seen on our website, we have a new IAEJ logo and a new website! Thanks to Jennifer Anstey who is keeping a watchful eye on our organization.

See you soon, here and there in Europe and for some of you in Hong Kong for the others.

Xavier Libbrecht.
IAEJ President
September 19, 2007

Your Royal Highness:

On behalf of the International Alliance of Equestrian Journalists (IAEJ), I would like to draw your attention to the recent communiqués between our organizations and the IOC with regard to the accreditation process for the 2008 Olympic Games. I must express my utter dismay and disappointment in the way the FEI has handled media accreditation for the Olympic Equestrian Events in Hong Kong.

As I am sure you are aware, the FEI and IAEJ have an understanding of collaboration whereby matters specific to media relations and operations at events are addressed. This cooperation effectively recognizes the IAEJ as the professional organization for specialized media, something which our members anticipate.

Our partnership has been instrumental in addressing working practices resulting in the publication of the Media Guidelines for Championships, which is made available to competition organizers. Furthermore, we have an understanding that accreditation procedures and applications will be channeled through the IAEJ with recommendations to the FEI, which in the case of the Olympic Games presents them to the IOC since the games offers specific quotas (ES/EPS) for specialized media.

It was confirmed to me personally and verbally on at least three occasions by the FEI communications officer that the IAEJ would be included in the process and that we would receive the list of applications in order to check it and advise on any queries.

In Mannheim I was informed that the job was done and that our input was both unnecessary and inappropriate.

Our elimination from this process, has resulted in a number of established media professionals, including IAEJ Bureau members, being rejected by the IOC while less established individuals have been accepted for the 2008 Olympic Games.

The consequences of this misadventure has serious implications both to our organization and its role in the industry and, most troublesome, the relationship we have built between our organizations. It cannot be understated that the partnership we have enjoyed with the FEI is in danger of being fractured, which is why we submit to you the need to address this situation for a more favorable outcome.

We have had an apology from Catrin Norinder who has taken responsibility for this breakdown in communications, however we must now ensure that this situation never happens again. Catrin has reassured us that we can work together to rectify the current situation for which we are thankful.

We respectfully call upon the FEI to revisit the procedure so that not only is this particular case amicably resolved but that we avoid derailing future collaborations in the interests of both parties.

Most respectfully,

Xavier Libbrecht,
IAEJ President
Dear Xavier,

I am grateful to you for laying out the concerns that IAEJ has over the issues relating to accreditation for the 2008 Olympic Games.

My clear impression from your letter and from the briefings I have previously received from FEI HQ is that this scenario raises the wider question of the FEI’s forum for discussion of areas of mutual interest with the media.

Although I am led to understand that there is no formal arrangement between our organizations I can understand that for historical reasons the IAEJ feels itself to be officially recognized by the FEI. My feeling is that this understanding has come about because, in the past, the liaison has been through the mutually convenient coincidence of Olympic Press Officers also being members of the IAEJ. Clearly that bridge was lost in the accreditation process of the 2008 Olympic Games and I believe this has been a significant factor in creating this scenario.

In relation to the individuals who have been effected and whilst I realize that this is of great concern to your organization, it is the IOC who are the decision makers in this process and we are confident that the IOC has applied the correct protocols in its two stage process.

In order to achieve good communication for all our events and to avoid a repetition of this scenario there is no doubt that the FEI would benefit from a close association, leading to affiliation, with a representative equestrian media organization, in the same way that we are benefiting through our closer ties with discipline specific athletes clubs who are now affiliates of the FEI.

However, I feel that the organization which we deal with must be representative of all aspects of the equestrian media. It must widely promote the availability of membership to all sectors of the print, internet and broadcast media, must closely vet those that do apply, but not restrict it to a “club” atmosphere and must regularly audit its membership to be assured of their continuing validity for membership.

There is no doubt that the IAEJ represents an important group of media within the equestrian world, although, at this time, not all the key individuals on the international circuit. I am sure that the IAEJ Bureau would recognize that your internal issues have meant that like us you have some work to do on your own structures to reflect your own statutes. In reaching the goals that you have set for yourselves I believe that you will match our needs for such an organization and that we can truly work together for the betterment of all concerned.

We would welcome the opportunity to work closely with a reinvigorated IAEJ at all events and in particular the Olympic Games. However, we will always recognize that the OC’s and the IOC retain the right to solicit, receive and accept accreditations from non-members.

The media, and in particular the equestrian media are important partners of horse sport and whilst I have focused the first 18 months of my Presidency on our internal audience, you can be assured of my intention to work closely with the media to improve not only the flow and quality of news but also the administrative and operational areas of the media’s interaction with the FEI and its events.

Might I humbly say that there is no way to reopen the cases for 2008 but in order to avoid this happening again we need to work with you to ensure that you have an organization which is inclusive of all members of the equestrian media so that we may be able to deal with you as affiliate members and, therefore, enjoy direct and transparent communications and a solid relationship with the FEI – instead of the haphazard relationship that resulted from an era of co-existence.

Although I have received the same from FEI HQ, I would like to receive from you a complete list of the media turned down and the basis for their accreditation.

The IAEJ has had a close and valuable relationship with the FEI and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,

HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein
FEI President
IOC & FEI Olympic Accreditation Criteria

The criteria listed below was followed by the IOC & and FEI when reviewing the list for Olympic accreditation:

* The Es and Eps equestrian accreditations distributed through the FEI are for journalists and photographers of the written press only. Any broadcasting organisations (rights-holders or not) were not considered;

* Anyone who has applied for accreditation in any capacity other than a journalist or photographer working for the written press (NF staff, NF press officers, press officers of other organisations, press officers of individual riders, PR agencies, etc.) was not considered;

* The contents of the publications has to be original and not an accumulation of press releases issued by other organisations;

* The official magazines of the NFs have been treated as any other publications and have been accredited;

* The contents have to be strictly sports related. Other types (health-or commercially-oriented) were not considered;

* The goal has been to ensure the broadest possible coverage of equestrian sport & the largest possible number of countries was considered. Therefore publications with the widest circulation have been preferred. Publications with limited circulation and strictly regional readership were not considered.

* Coverage of previous Olympic Games has been considered but does not ensure automatic approval.

* Similarly, IAEJ membership has been considered but is not by itself a sufficient criterion for granting accreditation. To be selected, members had to fulfil above criterion.

IAEJ sub-meetings:

1) World Cup Finals in Gothenburg - Friday April 25th  
Meeting Chaired by Kit Houghton & Gabriele Pochhammer

2) Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event - Sunday April 27th  
Meeting Chaired by Chris Stafford

3) CHIO Aachen - TBA  
Meeting Chaired by Xavier Libbrecht

Agenda for IAEJ sub-meetings:

1) The Road to Hong Kong - Accreditation Issues  
2) Correspondence with FEI President  
3) Review IAEJ Statutes with regard to TV personnel.  
4) Other topics for AGM in Hong Kong  
5) Annual dues increase  
6) New website  
7) Any Other Business