

Dressage SA

PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE 2019 YEAR

MARCH
2020



Presented by the President
of Dressage SA at the 2020
Annual General Meeting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

of the Dressage SA 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

I believe that again in 2019, DSA has been able to build on and improve on what we achieved during the previous two years. We have again faced a number of critics and also received a wave of wonderful gratitude for our efforts as the DSA management.

Many of the provincial structures are weak and need some new faces and volunteers to assist in getting things working again and others, have had a marked improvement in management and organisational reform. We all have a joint responsibility to assist in ensuring a year on year improvement, ensuring that standards improve and that members receive value for money and in so doing, that the discipline improves.

Our organisation is well funded, properly staffed and has all the hallmarks of being able to face the future challenges. My pre-occupation for the future is as follows:

1. Ensuring a proper and effective continuity after the handover from some of the council members that will be stepping down this year, I am one of these.
2. Picking up the pieces after the immediate challenges of covid-19 have been taken care of.
3. Improving standards and capacity of athletes, officials, administrators and coaches.
4. Ensuring that we are not legally exposed in such a way that the organisation cannot be damaged or bankrupted through a foreseeable future event against which we cannot take any form of insurance.

The overall position is however hugely positive and well-co-ordinated efforts on all fronts have ensured a professionally run and properly administered sports discipline with a lot to be very proud about.

It would be unforgivable for me not to thank each and every individual who has served so selflessly on our council for their enormous contributions. I also need to make special mention of the “dream team” – our office staff that have been incredible this year as well as FEI and SAEF who have contributed hugely in making us the very best we can be.

Lastly, my sincere thanks to the members of the DSA EXCO who have delivered way more than expected both in time and in achievements... thanks you guys, I could not have got through a single week without you.

I look forward to facing the 2020 challenges head-on and laying the founda-

Sincerely,



Pierre Hefer
President - Dressage SA



OUR WORK, OUR COUNCIL

I take great pleasure in presenting the members and all other stakeholders with the Presidents Annual Report for the 2019 year. This report is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all activities of the Discipline nor of the individual portfolios, but rather a high-level report of the year under review. Aspects of various activities of Dressage South Africa (DSA) are contained under individual headings as follows.

The Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI)

DSA have again this year built on and reinforced our relationship with the International federation (FEI) which has been greatly supported and promoted by the South African Equestrian Federation (SAEF), an aspect of their value to the equestrian fraternity which is extremely time-consuming and very valuable. We have received great support for our overseas athletes, international and local competition as well as funding for South African projects, see below. We can mention Robyn Sterley and Wessel Strauss specifically here for their continued daily efforts and dedication.

FEI Solidarity Awards (FEI funded project)

DSA this year launched the Learner Education for the Advancement of Dressage (LEAD) programme which was specifically directed at young riders and also creating a closer relationship between SANESA and DSA. The project is aimed at raising the athlete's standards, assisting the athletes coaches by way of co-operation, creating a more enthusiastic and dynamic image of dressage amongst the youth and ensuring a feed of your riders into the discipline.

DSA was most honoured to have made the short list for this year's FEI Solidarity Award in recognition of the LEAD programme which was launched and superbly managed by a wonderful group of dedicated and enthusiastic Coaches, Administrators and Volunteers. You can get additional information on this project by visiting www.dsalead.co.za. Unfortunately we were pipped at the post at the Moscow gala awards presentation when a fellow African project went to Uno Yxklinten (SWE), the Educational Leader of the first Farriers' training programme in Zambia, set up with the aim of increasing the know-how of farriers in order to improve the well-being of horses in that African country.

The Athletes Representative

I believe that we need to refresh the enthusiasm from athletes in supporting and communicating effectively with their provincial athletes' representatives. The clubs all should have a representative and such a representative must be able to understand the complexity of our sport and effectively be able to make their voice heard at provincial as well as national level. Sadly, at present, our athletes' voices are not effectively and properly expressed, and we are all the poorer for this. During the year under review, the athletes were represented by Michelle Moreira as the national athlete's representative but sadly, her support from the provincial athletes' representatives was to a large extent very muted. We look forward to a new appointment for this essential portfolio in 2020.



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International

DSA athletes have once again excelled on the international stage and we are extremely proud of all their efforts. The build-up, preparation and qualification for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 took up most of the focus of these athletes and with the games in jeopardy due to covid-19, the athletes are waiting to re-calibrate their training focus. Please see the international report for further details on the individual performances.

The South African athletes that train and compete overseas do so at an astronomical personal cost. We are all very quick to own and share the international athletes' personal successes and I believe that we should continue to build on and ensure that we as a discipline put aside a portion of every members annual subscription fee to go towards an increasing contribution as a show of our appreciation for them competing under our national flag. I welcome your support on this going forward. We thank Ingeborg for her dedicated participation and experienced leadership and also with to thank Robyn Sterley at SAEF for her support and dedication in managing this complex portfolio.

The South African Equestrian Federation (SAEF)

I am pleased to report that for a third year running, there has been a continued co-operation and efficient collaboration between the discipline of Dressage and the SAEF council, EXCO and staff. As the Federation gains strength in its standing from within, (the various disciplines) as well as externally from SASCOC and the Department of Sports and Recreation, the effective role of the organisation in elevating Equestrian Sport is consistently raised. The organisation continued to build on a healthy and stable financial position, and we congratulate them for exercising sound and effective policies in building the organisation. DSA are extremely mindful that there are a number of absolutely critical issues such as the the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture new draft amendment bill, lotto funding, national sports funding as well as coaching development and accreditation policy implementation that face the organisation in the year ahead and we call on all members to actively support the SAEF on these and other issues in 2020. DSA are doing everything in its power to ensure that all our athletes and officials are paid up members of the SAEF as we are continuously mindful that if all athletes competing in all disciplines paid their annual membership, that this membership fee would be dramatically reduced to less than half the current fee.

Legal woes

This year DSA was challenged in the high court and needed to defend the action. Furthermore, it there was a huge amount of resources both financial and man-hours spent on enforcing the basis of ethics and rules of our sport. I would like to both applaud the members of our KZN council as well as their judicial council, for selflessly and diligently perusing what is correct and just and also condemning those members who for selfish and ego-based reasons seem to always be attacking DSA, SAEF and SASCOC without assisting in solving the problems amicably in the best interest of the sport. I would like to point out that ultimately members monies are used to defend such actions and that these same fund are intended for training and development of the athletes and officials which as a direct result are much worse off.



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Judges

We wish to thank Sue Horne and her dedicated team as well as the provincial judges' sub-committees in once again ensuring huge progress and positive change. We recognise the high level of professionalism that underscores every effort that this incredible team undertakes.

I urge you to read her report and get an understanding of the huge task that this portfolio is responsible for. The portfolio delivered Judges Training, Shadow judging and Exam opportunities at the April 2019 Easter show. During the year under review, new Adult Dressage tests as well as Pony Rider and Children Dressage Tests were completed and launched.

The Judges Training Programme was finalised during 2019 and was ready for publication. However, this document now needs to be updated to include formal Accreditation Processes. An excellent and very interactive National Judges Seminar (open to all judges) was held in October 2019 in Johannesburg, before SA Champs and was run by FEI 4* Judge Jo Graham (UK). Judges and officials continue to play a remarkable role in our discipline and we thank them all most sincerely for their continued dedication to excellence and a high standard of personal integrity.

Coaches

Following the 2018 initiative launched by Dianne Smith, and the continued and consistent focused efforts and programmes launched by Regula Niehus this Portfolio has gone from strength to strength. The FEI Coach Developers courses have yielded some impressive results and DSA are starting to feel the impact of these professionals in the field. SASCOC has also announced the formation of their professional sports coaching organisation known as the South African Sports Coaching Association (SASCA) and DSA as well as SAEF have embraced and started working very closely with them to ensure a much more professional and tiered professional sports coaching framework.

We look forward to lots of good things regarding coaching for 2020 which will again deliver on our goal of developing better quality athletes through: the promotion of the Coach Developers work, Facilitating Level 1 Coaching clinics, Improving Coaching Communication channels, Framework for the Accreditation and Designation of coaches as well as developing a reliable and valuable Coaching Database. A huge note of gratitude must however be expressed to the present Coach Developers who have driven us all towards our goals with their wonderful energy, dedication and enthusiasm.

The Office Staff

We have been blessed by a wonderful group of knowledgeable, enthusiastic, dedicated and happy administrators this year. Debbie Hunt has had great support from Nicky Anderson and Carol has had the continued assistance from Peter Schalkwijk. These individuals have made a huge difference in ensuring a very well-run office and have raised the bar in terms of professionalism and compliance. We all thank them most sincerely for their hard work and look forward to working with them in the new year which again has some extremely ambitious and challenging goals.



OUR WORK, OUR COUNCIL

Financial

Our organisations finances have, for the third year in a row, improved tremendously by way of contributions made by members both in annual subscriptions as well as specific participation levies and contributions to training and awards events as well as donations. It is encouraging that our membership base is steadily growing, and this is taking the pressure off increasing the subscription rates in order to sustain the organisation's requirements. It is important to note that the participation levels in the Western Cape have increased dramatically and that the membership numbers in Gauteng have reduced when comparing to the 2018 year.

Again, during this year, we found that there was a problem with the provincial budgets not always being used to their optimal advantage as well as continued pressure to redirect budgeted funds to alternate budget areas where insufficient or no budget was allocated. As these practices were not allowed and as such some initiatives did not come to fruition, the DSA EXCO decided to put it to the Council to allow a much-simplified Low, Middle and High road project planning model for adoption in 2020. This would allow each province to decide at what level they wanted to pitch their membership fee and as a result thereof, how they intended to offer value for money to their members. Remember the majority of the membership fees go towards the payment of the DSA overheads which are primarily the database maintenance, insurances, salaries and rental. This model then also allowed the provincial councils to call on their funding at relatively short notice as the individual project and development opportunities present themselves. This decision was probably a good one in hindsight as the covid-19 will have a dramatic impact on show levy income and we will need to adjust our forecasts downward as a result.

IT Infrastructure and Database Management

Previous two years have proved that a robust IT infrastructure and a better developed disaster management strategy has again assisted in keeping our systems up and running. This year we achieved a 99.92% uptime as against our increased benchmarked goal of 98% uptime. The bandwidth capability has also been maintained and even at peak times, we seldom utilise more than 60% of our capacity. We have continued to improve infrastructure by partnering with Equisystems and providing a full replicated environment which is updated on an hourly basis as well as fully automated backup and archiving services at a relatively low cost, but with vastly improved redundancy capabilities. On the security front, we have implemented a hardware firewall as well as continued and monitored intrusion alerts to assist us in protecting against potential cyber threats.



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Schedules and Venues for 2019

Dianne Smith was co-opted to assist in managing this portfolio during 2019 as Janeese Silen took up the position of vice-president in the Western Cape. DSA EXCO have however requested that Janeese still assisted on the portfolio sub-committee and that she continues to run the DSA challenge. This is a very demanding portfolio and we are thankful that it is so well managed as it is one of the key elements that makes our sport work. During the year, the DSA Challenge has grown in numbers and the revised funding model has proved successful in making the Challenge the popular SA Championship for every rider and much easier to administer. The flagship SA Dressage Championships 2019 was likewise a great success as was the CDI 2* 2019 which were both hosted at Stokkiesdraai in the Northwest Province. The Dressage portion of the SA Youth Champs this year was hosted by Kyalami Park Club and was very well attended and managed. A forum, hosted by SAEF, was established last year to ensure that we do not have a repeat of the 2018 problem by properly planning and co-ordinating multi-discipline at least two years in advance.

Rule Changes 2019

The rule change protocols were completely overhauled during 2019 as it was felt that many rule changes included in the 2019 edition, were not in the best interest of the discipline and were voted in by the use of extensive lobby groups and a popular vote. This year we adopted a rule change approach utilising knowledgeably and experienced specialists. The policy was drafted to ensure a very even-handed appeal committee to ensure that the rule change committee had the correct oversight. The policy could only be adopted quite late in the year as it was required to be accepted at an OGM. As a result of the late implementation of the policy as well as the fact that this was a first time implementation, the process has run three months over the intended implementation date of 1 January. The process in general was however a marked improvement and we are very pleased with the new rule implementations. During this year DSA will strive to align and simplify the FEI, DSA and SAEF General Regulations to ensure a better and easier format to work with.

SANESA

DSA are pleased with the continued improvements of relationships and working structures between our associate member SANESA and ourselves. There is still a large amount of work to be done by both organisations in ensuring smooth and effective co-ordination of our efforts, but I am pleased to report back that a healthy co-operative attitude from all officials will ensure an accelerated result on all fronts.

Our future goals are aimed at: ensuring better provincial co-ordination and integration between office bearers of both organisations, a more structured approach to the use of Dressage SA trained and accredited officials and coaches, a better and more dynamic response levels to joint projects, a more focused approach to implementation of rules and dispensations, better database integration and all other areas in which sharing resources and expertise can enhance the young athletes experience in our discipline.



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Development

This has been one of our most important yet most neglected portfolio's in the previous years and we are extremely privileged to have Montanique Wilson on board this year to boost and improve our National Transformation and Development goals. Montanique has launched a number of booklet based and on-line programmes which you can study in her portfolio report. Montanique has launched an on-line Learner Management System (LMS) called iSpring which is rated by many as "best in class" on-line learning systems. The following courses were developed and launched and are available to all DSA members.

- Development of a Premium Dressage Groom Programme – Implemented in 2019
- Rejuvenation of the Para Dressage sector of our discipline – Developed in 2019 and implemented in 2020.
- Development of a Dressage Athlete Expert – Developed in 2019 and implemented in 2020.

We all look forward to what 2020 will yield but it may well prove that on-line learning could fill a gap in time management for our athletes which has been created by the advent of covid-19 shut-downs.

Thank you so much for your efforts and expertise Montanique, we are all very grateful to you for turning this portfolio around.

The Dressage SA EXCO

The EXCO team at DSA has again this year given hundreds of hours of their personal time in a dedicated effort to improve and manage the discipline to their absolute best possible ability. I have seldom been privileged to have such a wonderful and effective management team to assist in achieving the organisational goals. My most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to Vice President - Dianne Smith, Treasurer – Carol Pickering, Janeese Silen, Suzanne Horne, Regula Niehus and Montanique Wilson who have all worked so hard, been available at all hours of the day and night, made sure we keep each other in check and most importantly, displayed a magnificent camaraderie that has kept us all going when times seemed a little hopeless.

In Closing

I thank you all, as well as our athletes, coaches, clubs, show holding bodies and officials for allowing me the privilege to have again served as your president during the 2019 year.

Sincerely,



Pierre Hefer

President - Dressage SA





Strategic Partners

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