

Hello and welcome to the March IMGA Newsletter

With the mounted games community around the world growing each year competitions take place all year round. Around Europe organising committees will be starting to think of forthcoming events and in a few weeks they will be taking place most weekends. My competition season started three months early when last month I went to Sweden for the competition in Scandinavium.

This year England host the European Team Championships in May and Belgium the World Team Championships in July and it takes time to get everything just right.

Next year the World Team championships take place in Australia and they are thinking ahead and have sent details of the competition – find out more on page 6.

Remember this newsletter is a chance to tell the rest of the world what your country has been up to. Judging by the response I've had nothing is happening in the world - surely that can't be right?

Melanie Scott

IMGA Communications Officer

A word from the Chairman ...

I wrote in the previous Newsletter at the end of 2006 that we would see the footprint (hoofprint?) of Mounted Games spreading wider and wider, so how are we doing so far?

NORTH: In February, Norway's Arctic Pairs again pushed the northern frontiers of our sport in the Arctic Equestrian Games at Vestfold, and of course the ever-popular Swedish competition at Scandinavium again took place in Gothenburg.

SOUTH: In January, Botswana hosted the first African Cup competition in Gaborone. This was a truly international event with not only African teams taking part but there was also a team from Canada, and a referee from Europe.

EAST: In March, New Zealand's Horse of the Year again featured Mounted Games at the annual show in Hastings in the Hawke's Bay region.

And

WEST: Also in March, the USA starts the North American Cup series of events at the Kentucky Blue Grass Open at the Kentucky Horse Park.

Well, it looks like we're doing pretty well, don't you think? It seems to me that as hoofprints go, that's quite a big one!

Keith Martin

Chairman, IMGA

A word from the Vice Chairman ...

I have been coaching the Norwegian Mounted Games Team since 2005 and Carol and I are regular travellers with Ryanair. March has been a busy month - national selection is once again upon us. I am happy to say that the standard of riding in Norway is at an all time high and many riders have been training regularly and if necessary, have bought new ponies.

Last year, I suggested that instead of just selecting five riders to represent Norway, maybe we could select another five to form a development team (who would benefit from competing against other countries) and also another five for a junior team. This was very successful and Norway will be sending a senior and junior team to the European Championships and all three teams to as many competitions that finances and allocation permits. I get great pleasure from coaching and there is nothing better than riders listening intently to instructions and then improving their riding.

The national team travelled to the European Championships at Switzerland last year and after 60 races during the heats and final France, England or Norway could have won the competition going into the last race! (England won). We then travelled to the World Team Championships at Gothenburg and had really bad luck as three of our five ponies went lame. Hopefully this year we will be back competing for a place in the A final at Belgium. Norway won the indoor competition at the Oslo Horse Show in October and once again at the European Indoor Competition at Gothenburg in February, Norway or Sweden could have won going into the last race (Sweden won).

Carol and I are mostly hosted by Alyce and Per Ivar Lande and I thank them for their kind hospitality. Wherever possible we travel to the riders (to give as many riders the chance to train) it is easier for us to travel in the snow than many riders and ponies, we also get to see different parts of Norway and to any parents who have hosted us, once again I would like to say thank you.

We also travel to America as Alex our son coaches the USMGA team and, as he has work commitments, I help to take some coaching clinics. Again we have a lovely welcome from the riders and their families. I can also see a vast improvement in the mounted games riders in America from the youngest to the oldest and yes the 4everyoung teams are now seriously competing. Team selections are under way in America and they have just held the Blue Grass Open competition, Middlesex travelled from England to compete on borrowed ponies, the weather was glorious and it was a lovely competition. Alex is also looking forward to the World team Championships at Belgium.

Clive Jones, Vice Chairman IMGA

In this edition I posed the question of 'What does each member country want from IMGA, and what should the IMGA committee be doing for this to happen? I'm not sure why the response was so poor – surely every country must have some thoughts they would like to share with other countries?

Here are the answers that were received:

Norway

The Norwegian committee has nine members, a large number for a small country, perhaps. We hope, in this way, to reflect the views of our members. These are all matters that are looked upon as important for IMGA to take into consideration. They all have great impact on how effective the member countries can run their organisations and develop the sport.

1. Response on request for a rule change.

The committee had in 2006 worked out two requests for change of rule. The persons who worked on these two requests would have appreciated an answer to our organisation on the result. English is not our native language. Therefore, we need to know if a request is fully understood. All IMGA committee members have English as their native language. Working in an international community they should act carefully and take actions on requesters in order to secure full understanding of the request before it is dealt with. We do know and fully accept that English is the working language of IMGA, however, those who have English as their native language will always have an advantage and should be patient with others.

Request: Send a personal response to the country requesting a change.

2. Minutes from IMGA committee meetings.

The Norwegian committee would also appreciate minutes from all meetings/discussions in the IMGA committee during the year. This would make it easier for our members to understand what is going on internationally. We expect that IMGA do deal with quite a bit of questions during the year.

Request: Improve the feedback and information about what IMGA is working on.

3. International competition Blueprint.

The Norwegian committee has for a long time awaited information on how to organise an international competition for IMGA. We have heard for a long time that this is on its way. We are still waiting – is anything happening?

Request: To get the subcommittee to produce the document.

4. New organisers to learn from previous competitions.

We would also suggest that IMGA receives a budget and results for competitions such as The World Championships and The European Championships. We think this could be helpful for new organisers and very useful information in the discussions around the cost of running a competition. The riders will also feel security for what their money has been used for.

We think that accounts for running Worlds and Europeans should be looked at, and checked by IMGA's Officer of Finance and then be presented at the IMGA annual meeting. We assume this would be no problem.

Request: IMGA and the organising country work together concerning the finances of larger competitions. Results to be presented at the IMGA annual meeting every year.

5. European pool of ponies for overseas teams.

We recommend that IMGA together with the European member countries organise to keep a pool of ponies for visiting members to be used at The World Team Championship when held in Europe. Each pony is to be adopted of a European rider, team or club that feed, train and uses the pony, except during the World Team Championships. Visiting member teams from overseas borrows the ponies during The Worlds and pay a reasonable fee for that. The adoption will finance the cost of keeping the ponies. It remains to find a way for IMGA to raise the capital needed for buying the ponies in the first hand.

This will make it easier to find ponies to offer to borrowing teams. We also will be able to impact on the quality of ponies. This again will make it easier to accept a fee. If organised in a proper way some overseas teams might buy a pool of ponies themselves. This might be possible as long as the adopting rider/team feed and keep the pony in between competitions.

Request: IMGA to look into this matter, work out a plan/scenario, for discussion on the next IMGA annual meeting.

Sweden

We are quite happy with the work IMGA does. It would be nice with some media material that all countries could re-use. We have some concerns about having both Europeans Champs and the World Championships in the same year - we would like to go to both of them but it will probably be too expensive.

United States of America

One thing that the U.S. would very much like to have IMGA involved in is coach and referee training and certification. Granted many countries have made a good start at this, but it would be helpful to have guidelines and requirements that specify what constitutes a fully trained referee or a qualified coach. It would even be helpful to have a list of people who would help with training and certification.

The other thing we would like to see is more promotion of games internationally. We could start with a video on www.youtube.com with an explanation of mounted games and of each race with a video clip of each race. Sara and Cass Greiling put together a video for the youngsters that they coach and I have encouraged them to post that, but it would be very nice to have a clip from each country and to put a video together with an explanation of each race and post that on appropriate internet sites

All countries were invited to respond to this question. With thanks to those that replied - Norway, Sweden and USA.

News from...

Australia

Mounted Games in Australia has literally taken off across the continent with competitions on the East, West and South Coast. This year we will be holding our second National Pairs Championships with members from all over Australia and possibly some international guests from even further south New Zealand as well as holding our third National Individual Championships in Sydney.

We have been busy over the last year, holding competitions in four different states and continuing to expand our membership with a competition at least once a month in three states New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia with the recent expansion into Victoria.

We have recently just re-launched our website, www.australianmga.com adding a new forum and also a web-based newsletter subscription and improved photo albums.

We currently have one team in New Zealand to compete in the Horse of the Year Show and a team competing in the United States in early April.

Planning for the 2008 World Championships is progressing well. We anticipate an incredible eight days of activities soaking up the best of Sydney's highlights, the beaches, the harbour, Blue Mountains, the shopping and the sun, there is something for everyone.

The World Championships will be based on the Northern Beaches of Sydney at North Narrabeen, with the grounds, stabling, accommodation, shops, a lake and beaches all within walking distances of each other.

Why not think about an extended stay, we are negotiating with tour operators, airlines, car (campervan) rental companies to enable you to get the most value from your trip. Now's the time to be penciling in for 2-3 weeks leave in October 2008 and start saving for the time of your lives! Bring your family and friends, there's plenty of room for everyone.

The 2008 Worlds website will be launched later this year.

South Africa

In South Africa, we are working on getting things together to go to Belgium. We have an inter-house competition in Natal on May 1, and Botswana will be attending with two teams.

2007 Rule Books

The 2007 Rule Books will shortly be available, to order your copy please contact your international representative.

Don't forget, if your country has any news or ideas for the next newsletter please contact me at communication@mounted-games.org