



NARG

North American Riders Group

North American Riders Group 2011 Annual Meeting Recap

On February 1, 2011 over 200 equestrians gathered for the North American Riders Group (NARG) annual meeting to learn about their 2010 accomplishments and 2011 priorities. Murray Kessler, NARG board member, opened the meeting with a review of the agenda. He stated NARG's mission is "to unite professional riders and trainers to use their collective strength to make show jumping in North America the best in the world." NARG defines the best horse shows as being professionally managed, having excellent footing, top quality courses, the most prize money, reasonable entry fees, good atmosphere and entertainment, and a growing spectator base. Kessler then introduced the highly accomplished and experienced Board of Directors which includes multiple Olympic medalists and top trainers in the sport of show jumping. Murray then turned the microphone over to Will Simpson, NARG board member, who reviewed 2010 accomplishments.



Peter Doubleday discussing his experience working with NARG to help improve the Pennsylvania National Horse Show

2010 was a very productive year for NARG. They supported exhibitors at competitions, created and presented evaluations to horse shows that resulted in significant improvements at major events like WEF, Hampton Classic, Devon, and the Pennsylvania National Horse show. NARG re-submitted a prize money alignment rule change to the USEF, distributed position on Mileage Rule, created a recommended course designers list, added Hunter Harrison as Special Liaison to show management, and addressed the United States Olympic Committee regarding the top level of the sport and federation. NARG made available the Young Riders handbook

written by Kim Land. The group also weighed in on the water jump debate and worked to get Katie Prudent elected to the IJRC board of directors. Will then welcomed Peter Doubleday to the podium to discuss his experiences working with NARG to help improve the Pennsylvania National Horse Show (PNHS) and Devon Horse Show. Peter discussed how the PNHS board of directors reviewed the NARG feedback and committed to improving their footing and other

aspects of their show in spite of budget constraints. They felt it was important to make these improvements for the welfare of their exhibitors and the horses. He encouraged other shows to follow suit.

Next up was famed rider and trainer, Katie Prudent, who explained that she was inspired to get involved with the IJRC due to the disqualification of McLain Ward and Sapphire in Geneva. She was disappointed that the riders did not unite to support Ward. She hopes to unite American and International riders in the future. McLain Ward, NARG Vice President, then came up to discuss the events in Geneva. He told the attentive audience how NARG supported him by helping identify lawyers, running the press conference, and writing press releases. He also explained how the out pouring support of the equestrian community helped him through this difficult experience and how special it is to be supported by a group like NARG.

McLain introduced a pre-recorded interview of George Morris called "Insist on Excellence". George talked about the decline of show jumping in North America over the past thirty years. He also addressed how national pride has deteriorated with many American owners opting to support foreign riders over U.S. riders. He noted that the fault lies with all of us. We must all strive for excellence and never compromise our standards. After the powerful message from Morris, Norman Dello Joio, NARG board member, stood before the attendees to drive the message home. Norman said "NARG is working hard to restore greatness to American horse shows with their Top 25 initiative." Then he turned the microphone back to Murray Kessler.

Murray took the audience through the top 25 process and announced that Spruce Meadows Masters and Summer Series was the winner with a score of 92%. The board presented an award to Spruce Meadows President and CEO Linda Southern-Heathcott. Linda gave a brief speech in which said she was honored to receive the award and how Spruce Meadows has been a critical part of her family for many years. She also gave some words of encouragement to other North American shows that with hard work and dedication they too can produce great competitions. Kessler pointed out that aside from the top 5 none of the other shows in the top 25 received a score greater than 77%. "There is still much work to be done to improve North American horse shows", said Kessler. Syracuse Invitational was a close second place followed by the Hampton Classic, WEF and Coapexpan Club Hipico (Xalapa) in fifth place.

Chris Kappler, NARG President, closed the meeting by congratulating Andre Dignelli, Norman Dello Joio and Jimmy Torano for being elected to serve on the board of directors through 2013. Kappler ensured the audience that NARG will continue to focus on their top 25 ranking as a way to continue to help North American horse shows improve. NARG will also continue to support mileage rule and prize money realignment rule modifications. At the request of the membership NARG has added 3 open member meetings for 2011. The first will be held at WEF on February 17, 2011. Another meeting will be held at the Hampton Classic – date to be

announced. NARG will also hold a West Coast meeting this year as well. Location and date for this meeting to be announced. Kappler said "In 2011 we are adding a new owner's pride initiative which will help develop pride and recognition for U.S. owners and make owning horses for U.S. riders special again." He closed with thanking the group for attending and asking them for their continued support. He encouraged them to become NARG members to be a part of shaping the future of show jumping. Kappler left them with the final message of "Together we can improve our sport."

For the full NARG Top 25 Report or more information visit www.NARG.org.



NARG Board members present Spruce Meadows with an award for being the number one competition in North America. Left to Right: McLain Ward, Norman Dello Joio, Murray Kessler, Ian Allison, Linda Southern-Heathcott, Chris Kappler, Will Simpson, Kent Farrington, Beezie Madden

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