



# NARG

North American Riders Group

## The 2010 North American Riders Group Annual Meeting Recap



L to R: Andre Dignelli, Jimmy Torano, Will Simpson, Norman Dello Joio, Kent Farrington, Beezie Madden, McClain Ward, Murray Kessler, Chris Kappler

On February 2, 2010, over 200 equestrians attended the North American Riders Group's second annual meeting in Wellington, FL to learn more about our 2009 accomplishments and 2010 objectives.

Murray Kessler, NARG board member, revealed NARG's revised mission statement: *The mission of the North American Riders Group is to unite professional riders and trainers to use their collective strength to make show jumping in North America the best in the world.* "It was agreed our

previous mission statement was too broad. Our new mission statement will allow us to be more focused and effective in improving the sport," said Kessler.

McClain Ward, Olympic Gold Medalist and NARG board member, discussed the 2009 accomplishments which included broadening the skill set of the Board, supporting exhibitors by negotiating favorable solutions with show managers, creating and presenting evaluations of horse shows, submitting a prize money alignment rule change to the USEF, and collaborating with the USEF and the FEI North American World Cup Committee on a quantitative evaluation process for World Cup Qualifiers in North America. Ward said, "While we've made progress already, we still have a long way to go. We need to stick together to make real change."

NARG's 2010 priorities include; a top 25 horse show ranking, prize money realignment, an entry fee cap rule, and a World Cup Qualifier evaluation methodology.

Andre Dignelli, NARG board member, and Murray Kessler explained that NARG will send trained evaluators to horse shows to evaluate things such as footing, course design, and award ceremonies. The evaluations will then be peer reviewed and weighted. The show will then be given a score. "Giving show management specific feedback will provide them with a roadmap to improve," said Dignelli. Kessler then presented the Hampton Classic's evaluation, and total score of 81%. "The Hampton Classic is one of our country's best horse shows and they received the equivalent of a B minus. NARG believes with the feedback we provided their score will improve. We expect to influence the others we will evaluate next year as well," said Kessler.

"Prize money reallocation has also been a major initiative for us," said Kent Farrington, NARG board member. NARG believes Prize money should increase in relation to the level of riding, fence height and

class difficulty. This will ensure that riders are rewarded for having achieved a higher level of skill. Proper disbursement of prize money helps show managers provide the best events for competitors while furthering the sport of show jumping. Board member Norman Dello Joio stated, "This change would help protect the longevity of the sport and allow for the development of young horses."

In response to the rising costs facing horse owners, trainers and riders, NARG board members have created cost control proposals which were put forward at the 2009 year-end conventions. Ward said "To enter one horse in three schooling jumper classes at WEF costs \$600. That is a very expensive schooling for your horses." "Rising costs are limiting the development of our young horses and turning away prospective new comers to our sport," exclaimed Ward. NARG believes show management should focus their business efforts on drawing more spectators and sponsors and reduce exhibitor fees.

Beezie Madden, Olympic gold medalist and NARG Secretary, informed us that NARG is partnering with the FEI North American World Cup committee and the USEF to develop a quantitative evaluation tool measuring the quality of World Cup Qualifiers in North America. Every North American qualifier would be required to meet world-class standards and provide a level playing field across all World Cup qualifying competitions. This ensures that we send our best athletes to the World Cup Finals.

NARG has a staggered Board of Directors which puts 1/3 of the board up for election yearly to serve a three year term. Open nominations were held in November and reviewed by our nominating committee. The vote was then opened to the membership. Voting was finalized at the meeting and the group announced that Will Simpson, Mclain Ward, and Murray Kessler were elected with over 98% of the vote to serve through 2012. Mclain Ward is one of NARG's founding members and will continue to serve as Vice President. The addition of Olympic gold medalist, Will Simpson, from the West Coast furthers our geographic diversity and reach. Will brings the experience and knowledge he has gained serving as President of the West Coast Active Riders organization. Murray Kessler most recently served as Chairman of the Board and CEO of UST, Inc. Murray's experience with other professional sports such as NASCAR, NHRA Drag Racing, PRCA Rodeo and serving on the Pro Bull Riding advisory board makes him a great asset to NARG.

"Our Board of Directors has vowed to put those things that benefit the sport of show jumping first. With the commitment of our Board and support of our membership we will use our collective strength to make show jumping in North America the best in the World.", said Chris Kappler, Olympic gold medalist, NARG founder and President.

Kappler thanked members for believing in the North American Riders Group. He reviewed the new membership fee structure and encouraged attendees to join if they haven't already. He said, "All Board members are Founding members and have each donated \$4,000 to date. We are grateful for the financial support of the board and our members. NARG relies on this support to achieve our goals. Our mission is true and clear and with a growing membership, together we will improve our sport."

To learn more about the North American Riders Group or join visit us online at [www.narg.org](http://www.narg.org).