INTERVISTA PRINCIPESSA HAYA

**1)** Après quatre ans à la presidence de la Fei, quel’est’ votre bilan ?

**After four years as a president of the FEI, what are your results?**

It has been an honour to serve equestrian sport over the last four years and together we have achieved an enormous amount in that period. Since my election to the FEI Presidency four years ago we have implemented more than 80 percent of the deliverables outlined in my 2006 manifesto, including significant improvements in communications, marketing, FEI finances, grassroots development, liaison with the National Federations and welfare.

Regarding modernisation of our governance structures we have established the Audit and Compliance Committee, Nominations Committee and Athletes’ Committee in line with IOC (International Olympic Committee) guidelines. We have made numerous investments in communications infrastructure and have brought new sponsors on board such as HSBC, which sponsors Eventing, Meydan, which sponsors the Nations Cup and also Alltech, as title sponsors of this year’s FEI World Equestrian Games. And we have continued our long-term partnership with Rolex, which has just signed up for a further three-year sponsorship contract.

The welfare of the horse is one of the central pillars of the FEI and I am very happy that we have taken huge steps regarding animal welfare through the FEI’s Clean Sport Campaign, putting in place protocols that will ensure that the sport is clean, competition is fair and the competing horses are safe. This campaign has involved a revision of the rules and the production of a list of prohibited substances that makes a clear distinction between doping and medication, with strict sanctions for doping in line with the World Anti-Doping Code. An Equestrian Community Integrity Unit has also been set up to safeguard the integrity of equestrian sport and we are also working on professionalising the sport over time. The FEI has been greatly assisted in this task by Professor Arne Ljungqvist, Chairman of the IOC Medical Commission and Vice-Chairman of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and Lord John Stevens, former London Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

The specific measures taken by the FEI, which go into accreditation protocols, searchable drug databases and the like are too numerous to list here, but can all be found on our dedicated website, [www.feicleansport.org](http://www.feicleansport.org), which provides all the information that anyone involved in equestrian sport needs to know, including a number of tools to stay informed. Perhaps the greatest difference between our recent efforts to prevent doping and previous initiatives is the much greater focus on education and communication, leaving little room for anyone to state that they simply didn’t know what they should or should not have done.

Commercially, we have achieved a lot as well. One of the biggest cultural steps forward that we made was that the FEI has started to become a body that brands its sport rather than branding itself. The FEI also no longer survives predominantly on taxation of its sport. Indeed, this is the first administration that has not increased taxes at all. Now, the proportion of overall revenue from independent commercial activities, as opposed to the activity of independent organisers, has gone from 29% of our overall commercial revenue in 2005 to 49% last year.

In terms of a better communication with the National Federations we established an NF Liaison Office and with a view to our drive towards further development of our sport we have established an Education and Standards Department. We have an array of new communications vehicles, including newsletters, video webcasts and publications that ensure that we reach all corners of the earth and that we are more transparent. In addition, we have FEI TV, with a competitive tender for distribution and production contracts with defined targets and incentives (IMG and MBPTV).

However, I know that there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the path we have taken will become second nature to us.

**2)** A Taipei, le prochain mois de novembre, l’Assemblée Generale de la Fei devrait rennommer ses charges: quelles sont les raisons principales pour lesquelles vous avez presentée de nouveau votre candidature ?

**In Taipei in November the FEI General Assembly will vote on candidacies: which are the main reasons why you will stand for Presidency again?**

This sport has given me some of the happiest moments in my life and I would like to give something back to it. I love what I do now, and would like people to look back and say that the FEI, which I was part of, made a real difference. That is why I would like to serve as FEI President for another four years.

Even though I am currently concentrating on delivering the rest of my Manifesto I still have the passion and the energy to put into another term. The FEI has already undergone massive changes and I feel it now needs to focus on consolidating the progress made over the past four years. I am very aware that new systems and procedures need time to settle in and become routine as far as the regulatory side is concerned and with regard to the performance of FEI Headquarters. New approaches aren’t embraced by all overnight.

We have achieved a lot already but we still have some way to go and I would be honoured to continue leading the Federation on that path.

**3)** Quels sont les objectivs les plus importants que l’equitation devrait obtenir dans le années prochaines pour ameliorer la diffusion du sport equestre et la culture du cheval?

**Which are the most important goals equestrian sports has to achieve in order improve the spread out of the equestrian sport and culture?**

I think that unity and commonality of purpose are the greatest challenges facing the FEI and our sport. Only when we are all on the same page will we be able to really move forward together and secure a sustainable future for the sport we love.

We will have to continue to work hard to ensure our place in the Olympic family. Being a part of the Olympic programme is a privilege rather than a right and we must ensure that equestrian sport continues to develop in line with Olympic ideals and principles so that its place in the Olympic Games continues to be assured and can develop in prominence. The IOC rightly reviews the sports on the Olympic programme on a regular basis to ensure that the sports that are part of the Olympic Games deserve to be – namely that they meet certain criteria including universality and appeal.The positioning of equestrian events in London’s Greenwich Park will ensure that the sport is very much at the heart of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

For the equestrian industry, and the International Federation, the support of the audience and the support of our sponsors are as important for our sport as for any other sport. That is why we have to continue our efforts to ensure the partnership with high-level sponsors like HSBC, Rolex, Meydan and Alltech and to attract new sponsors.

I would love to increase the proportion of overall revenue from independent commercial activities, as opposed to the activity of independent organisers, from the 49% of 2009 up to 70%. This revenue helps us to improve the level of our series and our championships in terms of the overall quality of staging of the event, the attractiveness of the sport in terms of enhancing the quality of television production and bringing the sport to a wider audience through the platform of the FEI’s official video website, FEI TV. This in turn will increase the global reach of equestrian sport.

**4)** L’Assemblée Generale de Taipei devrait agréer définitivement le nouveau règlement antidoping, et meme la “progressive list”: pourquoi, selon Vous, il y a eu des oppositions ?

**The General Assembly in Taipei will finally decide on the new anti-doping regulations as well as the “progressive list”: Why, in your opinion, has there been opposition/ resistance?**

As we are an international federation with 133 members, it is to be expected that not everyone will agree all the time. At the 2009 General Assembly in Copenhagen the FEI offered alternatives to the National Federations, who voted democratically. It’s natural for those against a proposal that is passed to criticise the process afterwards, but as the voices of all Federations are important to us and because of the divisive nature of the close vote on this critical issue, the FEI Bureau took the decision to postpone implementation of the progressive list so as to allow broad consultation on the matter.

Much of the current debate over drugs in equestrian sport stems from the lack of understanding of two very different issues - attempts to cheat with illegal, dangerous substances and, more commonly, the routine administration of therapeutic medications, which can result in inadvertent infringements but cannot be classed as animal abuse. That is why I feel confident that, as a result of the long consultation process of the Ljungqvist Commission, the measures we have taken are as inclusive and thorough as they could be.

Regarding the question of the in-competition use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, the FEI Congress that was held in Lausanne on 16/17 August, also served as a broad and inclusive forum for debate on this important issue. The final decision on that will be a democratic vote by the National Federations at the General Assembly in November.

**5)** Le “welfare” du cheval ne depend pas seulement de l’antidoping, mais de plousieurs conditions, c’est à dire la vie dans l’écurie, le travail, les transports, etc. Selon Votre expérience de President de la Fei, Vous confiez plus sur le règlement ou plus sur la diffusion de la culture equestre?

**The welfare of the horse does not only depend on anti-doping measures but on many conditions, such stalling, travelling, transportation etc. According to your experience as the FEI president, do you rather rely on regulation or rather on the diffusion of the equestrian culture?**

The role of an international governing body is to create rules that are put in place to protect its sport and provide a level playing field for everyone involved. Regulations in sports are there to either enable the sport to operate or to improve the conditions of the operational side. Having said that, I do not believe it is a question of preference that stunts the other equally important approaches to welfare that you have mentioned, such as stabling, transport, and travelling.

All of these issues are related to the external stakeholders of the FEI, such as the organisers and the athletes. In all cases I know that both of these parties wish to do the very best for their horses and their sport, and often their inability to deliver does not depend on the diffusion of equestrian culture, at least not in the developed countries. It depends on the financial climate and their ability to make a living. The solution to this is directly linked to our commercial activity, and trying to ease the burden of these parties in order that they can serve the sport in the way that they want.

I am under no misconception that times are very tough, not only in our sport but around the globe economically. By easing taxation of our sport and improving those possibilities, in addition to our awareness campaign, not only the dissemination of a culture but the ability to deliver that culture will be put in the hands of those who are at the heart of our sport.

The basis for the FEI approach towards welfare of the horse is the FEI’s Equine Code of Conduct, which outlines the basic objectives in horse welfare of all those with a part to play in horse sport.

As well as the Clean Sport Campaign measures taken in order to fight against doping, the FEI also lobbies for a transparent and comprehensive system of equine identification and traceability as it is central to the horse welfare issue, minimising the risk of disease-spread during the cross-border transportation of our competition horses. Identification and traceability are key factors to solving the quarantine problem and transport issues, particularly with regard to developing countries, on a global scale. That is why the FEI was one of the first organisations to provide horse passports worldwide and it also contributed to the establishment of an identification system of Unique Equine Life Numbers - UELNs - for horses.

With regards to making the operational side of sports easier via regulations, the FEI works alongside the OIE for a rational risk-based approach to international trade requirements for the transportation of competition horses. The FEI acknowledges the need for sanitary measures such as required testing and quarantine periods, but calls for these measures to be applied in a reasoned manner and proportional to the risk of disease-spread when transporting international sport horses.

**6)** Le trend du show-business et des media paraitre la creation de meetings de haut niveau, avec beaucoup de prix, pour une élite de cavaliers professionnels ert de chevaux de grande qualité. Selon Vous, y a t’il le risque d’une fermeture, d’une limitation pour les autres cavaliers, surtout les jeunes cavaliers?

**The trend of the business and the media seems to go towards high-level competition, with many prizes, for an elite of professional riders and horses of great quality. In your opinion, is there a risk of closeness, a risk of limitation with regards to other riders, especially young riders?**

Sports are traditionally based on a pyramid structure, and the base of that structure must be wide and solid. It is true that the concentration of the FEI in recent decades has been very much on the elite and top tier of our sport, and there has been a bottleneck for entry to that tier for many National Federations and upcoming athletes.

I am one of the athletes who had to battle hard to break into that top tier in my career, and in many ways I recognised clearly that my title helped me. Organisers were happy to invite me to ride as I brought exposure to the shows. I do not think I was ever very talented as a rider, so I am sure that my case shows that with experience at that level, good horses and hard work, then many riders could have done what I did. I have always seen and felt that the FEI should be about creating those chances for its grassroots athletes and Federations, and I also believe that was one of the main reasons that I was elected, because at the heart of everything I have tried to do in the last four years lay recognition of the fact that we had to be a global sport. If we are a global sport we can give the sport breathing space, and a chance to grow at grassroots level, and solve the problem of over-crowding at the very top of the pyramid structure.

Our sport is growing rapidly, particularly in the developing countries and amongst younger riders. The FEI cannot claim credit for this growth, it must recognise that the sport is growing and will grow with or without us, and we must move fast to grab the opportunity to make sure that it grows according to the values of traditional horsemanship. Examples of events that will ease the pressure and provide opportunities for exposure are: the first Youth Olympic Games in Singapore in August, the FEI World Challenge in Jumping, the FEI Children’s International Jumping Competition and the SIEC FEI World Youth Series. We have introduced specific series to give young talents from all over the world the chance to compete at an international and national level, both individually and as part of a team, and we must continue to do so.

But a certain exclusivity at the top of the pyramid is part of the package, and is a positive point for sponsors. Just as in football, where only the top clubs can participate in the UEFA Champions League for example, equestrian sport also has to have some competitions that only the top riders can take part in. In that sense equestrian sport is no different from other sports. From the International Equestrian Federation’s point of view, our top products receive more attention when they have prize money pots that are comparable to the large pots of other big sports. These larger prize money series attract huge media attention, and media exposure is key to the promotion, reach and popularity of our sport, which in turn improves the standards at grass roots level.

**7)** Que peut faire la Fei pour soutenir le sport de haut niveau sans un fermeture de la “base” ?

**What can the FEI do to further support the sport on high-level without an exclusion of the “grass roots”?**

I strongly believe that the key to this question lies in the future population of the FEI as a governing body. We in the FEI are the sum of our National Federations, and our National Federations are the sum of their athletes and our sport. The barriers of entry into the FEI need to be lifted, and the FEI needs to become a body that has a free flow of people up through the ranks from the arenas around the world, up to the top of the governing body. If that can happen then you will have a situation where decisions are made on the basis of developing the sport itself, and for the good of the sport itself. We have made steps towards that in my administration that I have already mentioned. We have created our first Athletes’ Committee, and we also now have an athlete as a voting member of the Bureau. Further we have a Nominations Committee that is now transparently ‘vetting’ candidacies to FEI positions.

I have already outlined the series and events the FEI has in place specifically to promote young talents. Also as I said earlier, the top events are actually a driver for the grassroots level as well, as they help to attract media and sponsor attention which in turn enables the FEI to invest in all levels of the sport.

In structural terms I think the key to the future of the sport now is regional development worldwide and for the FEI to be able, despite this harsh economic climate, to make big steps forward that will allow it to make significant investments in its sport worldwide. By opening up and improving regions that are developing in our sport, our community and our industry will be able to benefit.

More precisely, it means that the sport needs to grow at regional championship level. There is a problem of severe overcrowding on the calendar and this puts immense pressure on Europe. If we can develop the sport in farther flung regions, then the production of horses and the transfer of knowledge will still be European based, but it will be hugely bolstered. You can see this in the racing industry. Breeding capitals have traditionally been European, and despite the fact that they encouraged growth, the production of horses has still centered around European pockets.

That is one of the reasons why I am hugely excited about the fact that I am now working with a group of people on Development for the FEI. The main body of work for the Development Task Force is to identify and consider the critical constraints that constitute barriers to the development of equestrian sport worldwide, from a regional perspective as well as a sporting perspective. The Task Force is working on the formation of the FEI's Development Roadmap for approval at the General Assembly in Chinese Taipei at the beginning of November. I am convinced that the ideas and experiences of the members of the Task Force will have an enormous effect on the future of many countries that are less developed and less financially capable. I hope that in this way the FEI can help all nations in its membership to create a better sport for us all.

**8)** Parmi tous vos engagements, Vous reussez encore à monter à cheval? Si non, il vous en faut ? Et combien?

**With all your committments, do you still manage to ride a horse? If not, do you miss it? And how much?**

I ride as often as I can. There is nowhere in the world that I feel more at home, or more alive than when I am on the back of a horse. I miss competing, and I miss my friends and colleagues. I ride about three or four days a week, about two horses a day. It’s not just the riding though that clears my head, it’s just being in the stables, listening to familiar sounds, bandaging legs, mixing feeds, and fiddling with things in the truck and tack box! I am honestly just as happy with a broom in my hands sweeping the yard, and watching my daughter play on her pony as I am in the saddle.

I don’t think I could do my job as FEI President if I did not regularly remember what is most important, and moments like that remind me and keep me in touch with my sport. But moments like that are also my ‘time out’ and give me peace of mind and heart. And to be very honest, horses also have a lovely way of reminding you just who you are, especially when you start to take yourself too seriously and they buck you off. You have a clear perspective when you are sitting on the floor looking at your horse canter away and kick his heels! That’s probably the most important thing to keep in mind.

I have bred many of my former competition horses, Lucilla my Olympic ride, and a famous mare from Italy is the proud mother of a few beautiful foals now. We still have a rule in the stables that when you fall off you have to bake a cake for the stables, and with so many young horses around, I do find myself cooking quite a lot these days…!

**9)** Ce qui Vous a ècrit maintenant, Vous a fait une longue interview pendant une étape de la Coupe du Monde à Bologna, dans laquelle vous étées concourrent: si vous pouvez choisir, vous rebrousserez votre chemin ?

**"Some years ago, during a leg of the FEI World Cup which was held in Bologna, we had a long interview. On that occasion you took part in the competition as an athlete. If possible, would you go back in time?"**

In life you can never wish to go backwards, and I would not wish to take back anything that I have said before. I have been blessed that many of my dreams have come true in my life, and in some cases just like anyone else the hand of fate has been hard on me. I do regret one thing though, and that was the fact that in my competing days in Italy, I had many many friends there, and through the years I have lost touch with some of them. But life is not about regrets, it’s about getting up and making it right, so I do hope to find them again. And if they read this, I hope that they will know that I miss them and they should find me!

**10)** Se vous voulez me dire quelque chose que je n’ai pas Vous démandé...

**Is there anything you would like to say that I did not ask you ?**

International horse sport owes a huge debt of thanks to the Italian nation. Equestrian tradition reaches back many centuries in your country and has brought some major developments to our sport, such as the invention of the forward jumping seat by the great Federico Caprilli. And you have produced some of the biggest names in horse sport, such as the D’Inzeo brothers, the first athletes to compete in eight Olympic Games in a row, and the likes of Graziano Mancinelli – all legends in the equestrian world.

And you have some of the best venues in the world, such as Piazza di Siena, San Patrignano, Verona and Pratoni del Vivaro. Everyone relishes the Italian hospitality and top class competition at these wonderful venues and the FEI values the professionalism of the Italian National Federation in developing and promoting our sport. Your nation is an inspiration to all, thank you.

De la part des lecteurs de “Cavallo Magazine” et de “Cavallo Sport”, de mon Editeur et de moi meme, je Vous remercie pour Votre disponibilité à cette interview et Vou

s souhaite les meilleures chanches.

Paolo Manili

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