

BOUDHEIB: FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS INNOVATIONS

Now the international specialized press does not any longer use expressions like "group VII" or "UAE" as being entities one cannot divide. Indeed group VII includes very different countries such as the Persian Gulf Emirates, Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco which have nothing in common in the field of equestrian disciplines ...

From now on the press clearly makes the difference between Dubai (DIEC), Al Wathba (ADEC) and Boudheib (BIEV) as it does for all the other countries because it has noticed that various types of management exist. It acknowledges that it has become impossible to consider them as being part of an indivisible entity. It is important and this is not the least victory of Boudheib Endurance.

PRECISIONS ON THE PRESIDENT CUP RIDES

The President Cup competitions for Ladies, Horses Owned by Private Owners and Young Riders are traditionally held in Boudheib (BIEV) while the President Cup for Seniors is managed by ADEC (Al Wathba).

This year the winner of the President Cup for Young Riders (CEIYJ 2* 120km – 21 01 2017) finished the competition with an average speed (FEI) of 18.75 km/h. This speed is relatively common in Europe and elsewhere but it had never been seen before in the region. If we compare this result with the former years, one's note that the average speed of the winners from 2010 to 2015 was 26.61 km/h reaching 28.58 km/h in 2015. We also note that they did increase every season, 2010 being "modestly" 25.65 km/h.

It is also interesting to note that the winner did not exceed 21.53 km/h on his fastest phase. On the contrary the 3rd one ended his ride with a top phase speed of 34.02 km/h, which in 2013 means a difference of almost 12.50 km/h with today's.

The speed decrease is significant. It is remarkable moreover when one knows that the President Cup for Young Riders is a kind of explosive cocktail since they are speed lovers, have top quality horses and are eager to win the prizes (even if 70% are for the BECA ranking).

Speed breaks horses. A recent study done by the École Nationale Vétérinaire de Maison-Alfort 's researchers (National Veterinary School of Maison-Alfort – France) based on the ATRM database confirms it once more¹:

- Speed is a major factor of risk.
- The presentation time is an important sign of a good condition.

In conclusion of their study they advocate among other solutions:

- to slow down the horses during the competitions;
- to reduce the presentation time.

This is exactly what the Boudheib Protocol (BECA) has been doing for more than one year with convincing results.

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1. – Prize giving ceremony with no longer "invisible" horses.

The speed of the CEIYJ 2* of the President Cup is low but at the same time the percentage of qualified horse is correct however inferior to the ones of the former CEIs of the season held under the same protocol in Boudheib (respectively 79% and 61%). The noticeable difference is obviously due to the distance since those CEIs were 80 km long.

The distance factor was obviously coupled with a relatively bad management on the tracks. Numerous riders were seen galloping on the natural track as they always do on the prepared "traditional" ones. It increased their horses' tiredness as a result. That is why an unusual number of horses were disqualified due to the incapacity to be presented in time (10%), added to gait irregularities (14.5%) and horses declared "metabolic" (26.9%). One has to note that around half of the latter were above the 56 bpm authorized. 11.6% of the horses were retired by their riders, trainers and/or owners because, if they were, at that time, in good condition they were not fit enough to continue in the same condition according to the BECA parameters.

So one can estimate that around 30% of the horses did not finish the ride, either because they could not match the Boudheib Protocol parameters or because their riders, trainers or owners wished to preserve them.

Some trainers and riders admit that they will have to modify their training technique and will have to learn a different way of managing the rides. This was even the topic of an half an hour live debate on Abu Dhabi TV, the author of these lines being invited as a participant. All are not yet convinced of course, but all feel that the borders are moving. It is a challenge for all.



2. – The horses are not only in the place of honor during the prize giving ceremonies, they are also given some carrots. Another way of recognizing them as partners.

During this session (January 19th, 20th & 21st) some of the treating vets had brought books with them to spend positively the hours of inactivity they knew they would have to face during those 3 days. They were right because except for some horses receiving 10 liters of fluid and a few anti-inflammatory treatments for comfort they had almost nothing to do during those 3 days of competition. It is now a standard in Boudheib and no one is as surprised as they used to at the beginning of the enforcement of the Boudheib Protocol.

REVIVING CULTURE AND TRADITION

Cheating is a recurrent problem. Everyone knows that some people spend a big amount of energy in this addiction that they could better use in a different way. Sh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan is perfectly aware of that.

That is why, creating a huge surprise, he postponed the start of the Competition of the Horses Owned by Private Owners and had the riders gathered in the "majlis" (conference room) where a Coran was open at a specific page. All the competitors had to read aloud a verse he had chosen and swear publicly that they would not cheat and had no intention to do so. This was broadcasted live by Abu Dhabi TV and the Internet TV of Boudheib.

To betray one's oath is for sure dishonorable. It then leads to an unavoidable social banishment. This bears heavy consequences. For Sh. Sultan it was also a way of putting the horses' welfare back at the center of everybody's concerns and to remind them of the fundamental precept which imposes respect for every living being and therefore for the horses during the competitions.

As the English language, evolving in a maritime nation, developed an unmatched vocabulary in the field of sailing and navigation, the Arabic language created a vocabulary to describe and name horses which is unsurpassed. This did not come out of the blue and shows the importance of horses in this culture. The culture and its vocabulary convey traditional love and respect for horses.

To ill-treat them by speed excesses and risky medications during endurance competitions is a breach of the tradition. The aim of the Boudheib Protocol is certainly to retie the threads of the tradition loosened by the desire to win at all costs. This is one of the educational elements of what is underway in Boudheib. It is also a way to reintroduce one of the fundamentals of civilization.

INFORMING TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Every day before the rides, an official presentation of the BECA parameters was held in the "majlis" (conference room). A clear and simple document was distributed and explanations were given as needed.

BOUDHEIB ENDURANCE CHALLENGE AWARD (BECA)
THE POINTS CALCULATION EXPLAINED - 2017 VERSION

WHY?
 The Boudheib Endurance Challenge Award (BECA) and the FEI rules belong to the same family. The BECA strongly emphasizes the Horses' welfare - which is paramount for both rules - and helps the riders, trainers and everyone involved in endurance to keep it in mind throughout the competitions.

SPEED CALCULATION

COMPARISON BETWEEN FEI AND BECA

RECOVERY CALCULATION

HEART RATE CALCULATION

Example:
 Between 12 and 20 km/h the mathematical round up is used.
 • 12,000 km/h is counted 12 km/h (0 points)
 • 12,500 km/h is counted 13 km/h (0 points)
 Between 20 and 23 km/h the rule is the same:
 • 20,000 km/h is counted 20 km/h (0 points)
 • 20,500 km/h is counted 21 km/h (0 points)
 • Above 23 km/h, 0 points.

RECOVERY TIME
 Maximum Recovery Time (600 seconds) - 107
 Recovery Time (RT) - 107
POINTS $(600 - RT) / 30 = \text{number of points}$ X

The recovery time is subtracted from the maximum authorized recovery time (30 minutes or 600 seconds). If the recovery time is above 30 minutes, the horse fails to qualify.
 Example:
 • Horse recovery time 1'47" (107 seconds)
 • Calculation: 600 - 107 = 493
 • $493 / 30 = 16.43333333$
 • Round up: 16.43 points

HEART RATE
HEART RATE $(HR2 - HR1) \times 3$ | $(HR2 - HR1) > 2$ | > 16
POINTS 2 | 0 | 0

The Cardiac Recovery Index is used (difference between the 1st HR (HR1) taken before the test and the 2nd HR (HR2) taken after the test). This is done according to the FEI rules.
 Example:
 • HR1 = 53 | HR2 = 53 | HR4 = 53 | HR2 = 53
 • HR2 = 51 | HR2 = 53 | HR2 = 55 | HR2 = 56
 • Points = 2 | Points = 2 | Points = 2 | Points = 0
 This is not enforced at the last phase for the points.

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3. – An extract from the document distributed during the briefings.

This official and systematic presentation is one of Boudheib novelties in a country where traditional briefings disappeared years ago.



4. – The briefing is about to begin in the "majlis".

One cannot undertake anything new, have people understand its very meaning and explain the way it works without this type of action.

It also creates a link between the organizer, the officials and the competitors, which is far from being useless. Dialoguing is a form of mutual respect.

DETECTING "BLOCKED" HORSES.

A horse is lame because it is suffering. A non-suffering horse does not wobble. This is why some people started to desensitize the legs of their horses to have them pass the veterinary inspections "easily" during the

endurance competitions (a minimum of 9 inspections for 6 phases' competitions and up to 13 in case of persistent doubt).

This desensitization is either permanent by irreversible surgery or provisional by injection of desensitizing substances which we will not even name here. As a consequence the horses cannot feel the surface where they place their feet which is also dangerous for the riders. Worse is the fact that they will not show any sign of pain before the final disaster. That is why, for instance, some horses, victims of too intensive training, suffer spectacular fractures during the effort because of excessive speed mixed with substances "hardening" the bones but at the same time suppressing their capacity to adapt progressively to the stress. Ill-treating them this way is a criminal offence.

In Boudheib, far from being satisfied with discussing and deploring the situation, some vets are making tests in order to find an efficient limit between natural reactions and fraudulent desensitization.

It was decided for the first time during the last 3 days of competition that these tests would be made publicly after the final inspection of the finishers. This was implemented under the watchful eyes of the participants and broadcasted live by Abu Dhabi TV and Boudheib Internet TV.



5. – Desensitization tests undertaken after the final inspection in the inspection area.



6. – Normal reaction of a healthy horse. The test consists in pushing a blunt point against the leg with a slowly increasing pressure. This test does not create any pain or wound.

It is impossible to dream of a better way to get an efficient impact. These tests are not yet validated and numerous ones have to be conducted in order to reach a reliable protocol which could be approved by the FEI and therefore spread widely.



7. – The tests were held publicly and aroused a true interest.

The study is not complete yet but you only had to look at the trainers, the owners and the riders present to understand that the surprise was great and the impact certainly strong.

FACING THE FUTURE

Sh Sultan is perfectly aware that if transforming the participants of today is important and necessary, it is essential and exhilarating to teach the young generation and thus eradicate from the beginning what led to the situation the Boudheib Protocol is fighting against today.

This is why student delegations of all ages were welcomed during the rides. They had various research projects to discuss or were only keen to get information.



8. – Pupils have come to watch and ask for information about endurance.

But also, the children of the Boudheib Riding School could take part in a 10 km mini endurance ride to get acquainted with the equestrian sport from inside and learn good practice from the beginning. A great hope is placed in them, and everyone wishes to see them practice and promote the love of honest competitions and respect for their horses in the future. This is an activity which is exactly one of the aims of the Boudheib Protocol (BECA).



9. – Briefing and instructions before the start of the special 10 km ride. Note that the less experimented children wear a body protector in case of a fall.



10. – Veterinary inspection under the watchful eye of a coach for each pupil.

The Boudheib International Endurance Village (BIEV) is one of the rare places on the planet Earth, if not the only one, where innovations are concretely developed. They aim at restoring an endurance of quality, one that preserves the horses and is extremely competitive as well.

Endurancing is much more than speeding.

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