

## **Conclusions and Proposed Actions based on OHTA Coach Survey 2009 / 2010**

The OHTA Coach Committee ran a survey of Ontario eventing coaches. The survey ran from December 2009 through February 2010. The following is based on survey responses.

### Responses

A relatively small portion of coaches responded to the survey (about one third). Not clear whether this was due to time constraints, lack of interest, technical difficulties (some may not have been comfortable responding on-line), apathy or other reasons. This limited response level means that the survey responses may not be entirely representative. Having said this, the survey responses yield a number of observations. In particular, there is quite a lot of input specific to OHTA committees for Young Riders, Rules and Safety.

### Coach Profile

Our coaches are mature and experienced. They are aged 20 to 50 years, have a minimum 5 years coaching experience and coach competitive eventers along with other disciplines. The bulk of coaches are in the Central West area of Ontario (this parallels Ontario's large eventing centres in the Orangeville / Caledon / Hockley Valley areas).

Our eventing coaches are a source of information and have (sometimes quite strong) opinions on a variety of issues facing our sport.

### Communication

Coaches feel they have access to the OHTA, but are less convinced that their input is "taken seriously". A number of comments and the volume of opinions on topics suggest (some) coaches want to be more able to voice their opinions to the OHTA.

### ***ACTION:***

- *Update "Coaches Corner" on OHTA website*
- *Coach input form on OHTA website- Include a contact form for input / comments from coaches. Commit to respond to input within 1 week with the following steps:*
  - *Acknowledge receipt of input and indicate when to expect a detailed response*
  - *Offer response (if appropriate) or fwd comment / query to appropriate committee or organization for response*
- *Solicit views from coaches on key questions / OHTA actions:*
  - *either phone interviews or small focus groups – each member of coach committee to run 1 or more groups*

### Young Riders

Coaches generally support the Young Riders program, and many have students involved in YR. Opinions vary on focusing on lower versus higher level YR's.

***ACTION:***

- *Continue keeping website up to date on YR activities and including coaches in email correspondence (Linda Plank is already up on this).*

Rules and Safety

Coaches but would like easier access to rule books (hard copy), and feel that application of rules across competitions is inconsistent. They count on the OHTA to help them stay up to date on rule changes and interpretation. Coaches are a rich source of information that could be used in the rule-change process.

Questions about Safety garnered much response. Opinions focused on 1. skill, 2. watches, 3. falls and 4. application of rules. Coaches feel we do not need to go further on safety rules. Emphasis should be on more skill and education rather than rules to improve safety. Many oppose the no-watch rule (with a few exceptions). Rules need to be applied consistently across competitions.

***ACTION:***

- *Rules – Explore making hard-copy rule books available (print and sell?)*
  - *Continue email blasts to warn members of rule changes*
  - *summary of new / important rules or interpretations on OHTA website (have national rules committee involved in this to ensure correct wording / interpretation)*
  - *Note in Coaches' Corner inviting input on rules / rule changes*

Information

Coaches want information including:

- Hard copy Rule Books,
- Articles to clarify eventing rules
- Articles that answer commonly asked questions (Q&A)
- Articles on common issues faced by coaches

***ACTION:***

- *Articles on coaching issues (1 monthly?)*
- *“Ask the coach” section on website (with guest respondents?) and responses posted*

#### Services from the OHTA that coaches want

Coach specific seminars and clinics (the National Coaching Symposium was well supported), coach mentoring, assistance to gain coaching certification, networking opportunities with other coaches

#### *ACTION:*

- *Link to OEF / Equine Canada with coach certification information (links, helpful tips on getting started in certification process)*
- *Ontario Coaching clinic (hands on, use senior Ontario coaches) – Fall 2010 ?*

#### Coach Awards

The response here was mixed and rather luke-warm. This suggests that this is not a priority for now.

#### *ACTION:*

- *Put Coach Award idea on the shelf for now.*

#### Suggested Actions – Summary

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- *Put Coach Award idea on the shelf for now.*

# Summary of Responses to 2009 / 2010 OHTA Coach Survey

In total 33 coaches responded out of 110 coaches listed on the OHTA Coach List.

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

### **Please indicate your age range.**

Most (27) are between 20 and 49 years, none under 20 years, 6 over 50 years.

### **Please tell us how long you have been coaching**

Most (30) over 5 years.

### **In which region of Ontario do you coach?**

Most in Central West Ontario (GTA / Hwy 400 to Kitchener). The remainder spread across Ontario.

### **We are interested in knowing more about the students that you coach, both personally or by other coaches working for you in your coaching program.**

Most teach 11 to 20 students. 7 teach over 30 riders.

19 respondents have other coaches teaching for them. Of these 5 have staff teaching 30 or more students (these are more commercial teaching operations).

### **The next two questions refer to students that you coach personally. Please tell us the number of students you coach by discipline.**

All coach eventing. Most also coach other one or more other disciplines (dressage, hunter / jumper, recreational and beginner riders).

### **Do you coach eventing students who are active competitors?**

Almost all respondents coach competitive riders. Coaches have an average of 9 competitive riders, 6 of whom are YR.

## YOUNG RIDERS

### **If you coach young competitive students, do they participate in the Ontario Young Riders Program?**

Half of respondents have YR participants.

### **How many of your young competitive students are members of Ontario Young Riders?**

Most (18) have 1-3 YR's. Only 1 coach reported 5-8 YR's.

**The Ontario Young Riders Program is a useful resource to provide opportunities to my young, competitive students.**

Large majority agree.

**The Ontario Young Riders Program is useful to me as a coach as I set goals for coaching my young competitive students**

20 respondents agree. 6 disagree.

**We would welcome any suggestions you might have for making the Ontario Young Riders Program more useful**

Summary of Responses

More clinics, less expense

Several support focus on developing younger riders

Some suggest focus on higher level competitors

Actual Responses

-further opportunities of clinics and coaching with the best possible instructors

-start with younger students to produce a higher number of competitive riders

-keep the emphasis on the development of Training level and above

-several students competing at PT and cannot join because they are 10-12 yrs old

-info ahead of time on long term prep for YR qualifications

-system is not user friendly for parents or students. Many parents see it as a cash grab. The program aside from the competitions, did not offer any discernible benefits.

-clinics with other than the appointed coach

-more information on it and have the information more accessible

-more, reasonably priced clinics especially at the lower levels, a training camp

-junior riders would love to have access to occasional affordable clinics designed for other kids their age

## **RULES**

**Please rate the following statements about your knowledge and ability to stay up-to-date on eventing rules.**

I am fully aware of and understand Canadian eventing rules and their application.

Most (30) agree

I have the opportunities and information I need to stay up to date on Canadian eventing rules.

Most (29) agree

What sources do you use to access Canadian eventing rules and changes?

Many (13) use the rulebook. Many (11) use the OHTA website. Several stated multiple sources.

**Do you have any comments about the availability of information on Canadian Eventing rules and rule changes, and your ability to access them?**

Summary of Responses

Rule information is available but difficult to access and interpret.  
 Hard copy rule books should be more accessible.  
 Rule changes should be discussed with coaches.

Actual Responses

- preferred when a copy of the rule book was sent out by mail
- navigation through the on-line rule book can be very tedious, and it's difficult to print out.
- hard copy rule books should be more accessible. Interpretation of some rules - lots of confusions
- hoofbeats radio should help
- requires more searching than is necessary
- problem with how some of the rules are being interpreted at each event
- emails with a "heads up" so we know about new information
- more discourse with the Canadian Eventing Coaches
- we should be asked about rule changes before they happen
- readily available if you want them
- I rely on the OHTA website/updates because accessing the rulebook through EC can be a lengthy and confusing

**SAFETY**

**Equine Canada has recently made rule changes to improve the safety of events. We would like your opinion. Regarding recent safety-related rule changes:**

Almost half said "gone too far", almost half said "about right", 2 respondents said "not far enough".

**Are there safety initiatives and rules that are not working well?**Summary of Responses

Emphasis should be on more skill and education rather than rules to improve safety.  
 Many opposed no-watch rule (with a few exceptions)  
 Rules need to be applied consistently across competitions  
 Opinions focused on 1. skill, 2. watches, 3. falls and 4. application of rules

Actual ResponsesOn skill

- too little emphasis is being put on educating riders
- more responsibility should be put on riders and coaches to make sure the riders have the necessary skills for the level they are competing at
- education is a better method rather than making more rules to protect riders from themselves. Allowing students to compete above their ability and lack of knowledge on the part of the coach is the major safety issue
- until we improve the education and skill sets of the riders, the sport will remain highly risky

- initiatives do not help when substandard coaching by people who have never evented themselves

#### On Watches

-I completely disagree with the stop watch rule  
 -the no stop watch rule is not working  
 -no watch - doesn't make sense. Instead, have minute markers  
 -the watch rule is not dealing with the problem of poor riding  
 -no stop watch rule is not fair. If this is to be continued then penalties for riding too slow should be removed and only penalize riders for going excessively fast.  
 -thank God the watches are back to slow down the speedsters (SSP note – confusion here about rule)

-using a watch on cross-country at the lower levels can be useful

- using a watch correctly is part of the sport  
 -happy to see the Training qualification rule has been revised. The rule about watches not being allowed below Training is not ideal  
 - I support the no-watch rule for Jr and Sr (not Open) riders.

#### On Falls

-the "one fall" rule is too strict  
 -(disagrees with) not letting the riders continue after falling off

- Riders at E and PT should be allowed one fall on xc.

#### On Implementation of Rules

- just making sure event organizers and riders follow up on these rules  
 -decide how to implement the rules and have it the same at each event  
 -safety rules, unsafe riding and falls need to be policed better and agreed upon by organizers

#### **Do we need to implement further safety initiatives? Please specify**

#### Summary of Responses

Variety of responses including coach skill and responsibility, supervision by officials, rider qualifications.

#### Actual Responses

-eliminate riders who failed to accomplish 50% in dressage  
 -coaches have to sign off on their riders without being held liable  
 -address the coaching issue - coaches need to be better in order for riders to be better and safer  
 - More TD's watching for unsafe riding in the warm up areas.  
 - Some (FEI based) rules make sense at higher levels, but not for lower levels.

- unsuitable coaching is one of the biggest problems
- watch dog on the cross country to stop those that ride unsafely
- Lower level riders - it should be mandatory that they attend some type of clinic before the season starts
- Running events all on one day means horses and riders are tired. Hold events over 2 days, following the hunter jumper circuit model
- give current initiatives time to work.
- coaches need to educate riders on how to make decisions. Entries should require a coach's name, and that coach should be held responsible for the conduct of their athlete. I think incidents of concern should be taken to the coach of the athlete.
- qualifications to compete at Training level should remain in place for both Junior and Senior riders (not Open). Equitation and safety scores are positive

## INFORMATION SOURCES / STAYING UP TO DATE

**I use the following sources to stay up to date with current eventing issues and news (please check all that are applicable)**

Most use the OHTA website. Majority also use other internet sites, print media and clinics/seminars.

### Other sources to stay informed:

#### Summary of Responses

Sources cited were: Hoofbeats radio, OEF conference, EC website, Eventing Canada website, USEA site and magazine, regular e-mail notifications

**Please rate the following statements around information that is or could be provided by the OHTA**

Hard copy Rule Books important	93% - important or very
Articles to clarify eventing rules	100% “
Articles that answer commonly asked questions (Q&A)	84% “
Articles on common issues faced by coaches	78%

Other information comments:

- OHTA should provide event omnibus pages, start times, results
- EC should provide rule books

**Please rate the importance of continuing or increasing the following services**

Coach specific seminars and clinics	94%	important or very important
Networking opportunities with other coaches	79%	“
Coach Mentoring (more experienced coach mentors)	84%	“
Assistance to gain Coaching Certification	88%	“

**Other suggestions:**

- finishing the upgrading of the coaching system
- toughen requirements for coaching levels
- utilize wealth of information from "older" coaches
- coaches should have competitive experience for certification

## COACHING SYMPOSIUM

**Equine Canada held a National Coaching Symposium in late November, 2009. Did you attend?**

67% attended the NCS

**If you did not attend, we would appreciate knowing why you did not attend. This may help us to make future symposiums more accessible**

Summary of Responses

Virtually all responses were related to:

- financial constraints
- time and travel constraints
- other commitments

## OPINIONS ABOUT OHTA

**Please rate the following statements about your experience with the OHTA**

The OHTA is accessible to coaches	85%	agree
I know who to contact at OHTA	75%	agree (24% disagree)
My input is taken seriously by the OHTA	50%	agree (28% disagree)
Event Evaluations are a useful way to make input	67%	agree (27% disagree)

**We are interested in your suggestions for improving input from coaches to the OHTA?**

- phone call would be nice

- this (survey) is a great way we need more of these
- disagree with the Safety Equitation awards or competition
- OHTA is a toothless organization. They cannot implement changes nor do they request input from members. Open discussion is never encouraged
- coaching program in general needs a vision. What kind of coaches are we interested in producing
- Ask for suggestions, with open access on the website somewhere - then ACKNOWLEDGE your receipt of input and take some time to consider it.
- Surveys just like this would be nice BEFORE implementing rule changes

## AWARDS PROGRAM

### Do you think that OHTA should provide an awards program to recognize event coaches in Ontario?

Less than half (48%) support idea. Many have “no opinion”. 16% are opposed.

### If you support an awards program, do you have suggestions for criteria?

#### Summary of Responses

Some general criticism of poor coaching.

Some disagreement with awards concept.

Implementation suggestions were either results based, or subjective selection based on qualities admired in good coaches.

#### Actual Responses

##### General thoughts:

- this seems a little unnecessary
- some excellent coaches that have competed at Olympic level but have not completed all necessary CEF coaching exams- therefore not getting recognized in awards programs (SSP – I think some confusion here about certification and about possible awards program)

##### Implementation suggestions:

- results of students
- sportsmanship of students
- points of top 10-20 riders in a given level
- vote among coaches
- dedication and commitment to the training of athletes
- knowledge of the sport and rules and level of personal competitive experience
- emphasis on coaches who routinely produce riders/competitors who demonstrate excellent horsemanship
- unsung hero coaches who put through kids and schoolies in the lower divisions

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

**Please provide any additional comments or suggestions you may have.**

- we are not promoting the higher levels enough.
- more coaches clinics offered, at a low cost / fee
- I was shocked at the '09 Symposium. I question the choice of George Morris as a clinician both due to his lack of involvement in eventing and his antiquated, highly negative coaching style.
- glad to see YR program now supports these lower levels
- too much talk and not enough 'getting it done'. The coaching system appears to be in a continuous flux
- would like the stopwatch rule changed again, so they can all wear one