

**MINUTES OF MFHA TEAM CHASE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6th MAY 2009
AT CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE AT 2.30PM**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Fred French; Charles Warde- Aldam; Mel Williams; Charles Moore; Gill Cranfield; Jon Stephenson; Clare Cooper; Julie Barker; Paul Carley and Mike Felton.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the AGM on 7th May 2008 were approved. There were no matters arising not otherwise on the Agenda

3. COMMITTEE REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman reported that there had been 2 meetings of the Committee since the last Annual Conference. A summary of the Minutes of the meeting on 4th December 2008 has been published on the Web Site and there had been a meeting immediately before today's AGM.

The 2008-2009 season has gone well. There had been some issues over timing where there had been mechanical problems. It is essential to ensure that times are obtained for the 3rd and 4th horses and that there is a stopwatch back up in case of problems. Guidelines on timing will be sent to all event organisers.

The Committee discussed in detail the purpose of the sport in considering the way forward and agreed that it is:

- a. A challenging equestrian sport but one which is less expensive and less constrained by regulations than Point-to-Pointing or Eventing or Showjumping or Polo.
- b. A challenging and Corinthian sport but one in which safety is a prime consideration
- c. A sport which is of interest to those who hunt and a source of revenue to Hunts who thus promote events
- d. It is a sport which is attractive because it is a team event which open to all types of horses and riders who enjoy riding across country

Course building and the role of Course Inspectors had been considered. Sally Main is retiring as a course inspector. Debbie Topping agreed to take on this role, shadowing Netty Nevill initially. Tony Berry will inspect more courses up into the Midlands and Will Grant agreed to also assist with this task, initially shadowing Tony. The standard of course building has continued to improve and it is important that we establish a consistent high standard across all events and to ensure courses are constructed such that the competition in each class are consistent and compare fairly and sensibly across events.

The appointment and role of Event Stewards needs to be tightened up and clarified, in particular their remit and powers. It was suggested that mounted stewards are useful

but all need to be properly briefed . Time penalties and/or fines for those competitors found to be breaking the rules were thought to be appropriate sanctions. A “Job Description” on the role of stewards will be circulated to events before the start of the autumn season

4. NATIONAL SPONSORSHIP

The current situation is that Chesterton Humberts agreed a 2 years deal last autumn which is up for review in January 2010 when they have an option for a further sponsorship deal. Two of the main directors were part of the old Humberts management and are very supportive hunting people. Their marketing team are very happy with the first year of the new sponsorship deal and have put forward some small suggestions on how this can be improved going forward. There needs to be more coordination across events and improved communication. BSW will circulate the details of the sponsors requirements again before the autumn season and commentators should be encouraged to mention them as much as possible. Bibs and banners were used by all events. The renewal and ongoing level of sponsorship will depend on how we perform in presentation of events and promotion of the sport and the committee is actively considering improved PR and looking into ways to invest in promoting the sport better.

5. LEVELS OF COMPETITIVE INTEREST IN THE SPORT

There has been a great deal of interest and participation at Intermediate and Novice levels. Unfortunately the Open teams have reduced in number but improved in quality such that it can be difficult for some events to justify running an Open Class with so few teams competing. As the quality of the competition improves the number of teams decreases and this is difficult to balance. We are looking at prize money and over time it is important that we establish more consistency across event. The number of Open teams competing is a matter of concern at the present time and any ideas or suggestions would be welcomed by the Committee.

6. PROMOTION OF THE SPORT

Mick Hawkins was thanked for his work in administering the website which is an important tool in promoting the sport. We are looking at ways to improve and upgrade this and also to improve PR.

7. ORDER OF MERIT

The Goring Hotel has kindly agreed to continue to sponsor the Order of Merit and this will continue this season. There has been some considerable discussion between various committee members on the future structure and rules for the Order of Merit since the last meeting and it has proved more complicated than envisaged to formulate a scheme which achieves the objective of encouraging more teams to upgrade to Open. The Chairman confirmed that the basis of the scheme will be published as soon as possible

8. THE RULES

The rules changed in February to allow 4 year old horses to compete at novice level. There are no further changes to the rules.

9. MEDICAL, VETINARY AND SAFETY

The cost and availability of adequate medical cover remains a problem. Concerns have been expressed about this. Safety must however never be compromised. The rules are clear about the minimum level of cover necessary and safety standards and this is to be kept constantly under review. It was felt that the paramedics provide an excellent service and the presence of a doctor unless they were trauma trained often did not add to this. It was pointed out that there is no written policy on fatalities and this needs to be addressed.

10. RECOGNITION FEES, COURSE INSPECTION FEES AND SPONSORSHIP LEVY

These are currently recognition fee £100 for Open events, £60 for others; course inspection £60, re-inspection £40; levy £5 per team. These are to remain at the same levels and it was emphasised to events that the levy is payable by the teams not the events and this should be made clear in all schedules it is to be utilised in the future promotion and development of the sport by improving PR, upgrading the web site, encouraging new events and sponsorship for the sport. The course inspection fees should be waived for new events building courses for the first time.

11. MFHA TEAM CHASE ACCOUNTS

The accounts were tabled and approved to be submitted and circulated at the AGM – There is currently a balance carried forward of £11,517.90 available to invest in areas which will assist in promoting the sport and cementing its future

12. PROPOSED DATES SEASON 2009 -2010

It had been hoped that a list of proposed dates could be tabled at the meeting however the Chairman has now been notified that the Badsworth have decided not to run an Open in the Spring and the VWH will not be running an event at all next year. This leaves significant gaps in the Open calender. The Berks and Bucks have expressed an interest in moving their date forward to before the Championships and it was agreed that the Berks and Bucks and the Berkley should be offered the 28th Feb and 7th March dates to run Opens. The Taunton and Heythrop will discuss possibly swapping their dates. A final list of dates will be published as soon as possible

13. THE COMMITTEE. CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP.

Joe Cowen has been re-elected as Chairman for a further year but indicated he would retire and stand down in May 2010 . Suggestions for a new chairman frm May 2010 were invited. Netty Nevill, George Goring, Tony Berry and Charles Warde-Aldam were all re-elected onto the committee for a further 3 years. Three new committee members have accepted invitations to be appointed: Sara Metcalfe for 1 year; Ben Pauling for 2 years and Rowan Cope for 3 years and were all welcomed on to the

committee.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The requirement for wearing helmets when driving quad bikes on the course needs clarification and to be put in writing

Risk assessment forms need to be completed by all events and the current format will be circulated to event organisers

The ability to do online entries will be investigated further – this has been done successfully by Berks and Bucks via their own website.

All events should provide Mick Hawkins with a full list of results as soon as possible after their event.

Philip Cowen reported that there was a very high standard of competition at this years final. Although 18 teams qualified only 13 competed. He is keen to encourage less experienced Open teams and next year there will be a special prize for the highest placed team not previously placed in an Open.

We will consider changing the venue for the Finals in future years but need to “sell the sport” by establishing a standard for prestigious and high profile events.

Events should consider the nature of prizes in kind for novice teams and bear in mind that they are divisible between the 4 team members

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next Annual Conference to be May 2010 at Cheltenham Racecourse