

EQUESTRIAN JUMPING AT THE 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES  
*AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW*  
**JUMPING FORMAT**

By Karim Badaro

IT IS BEYOND DOUBT. THE EQUESTRIAN SPORT IS DEVELOPING FAST. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR JUMPING. OF COURSE IT IS A SPORT; BUT IT IS ALSO AN INDUSTRY. FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BOTH THE SPORT AND THE INDUSTRY, THEY HAVE TO EVOLVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.





The Equestrian sport has grown dramatically. Horses have gained quality in all **Olympic disciplines** (Jumping, Dressage and Eventing). A new generation of athletes has emerged with more professionalism, more dedication and more financial involvement.

In order to cope with these big changes, the FEI (**Federation Equestre Internationale**) had to identify the path to follow and the priorities to be set.

The FEI has well identified the problem and for the past several years, has devised a plan to tackle these issues and attain its goals.

The first issue identified, was to make the sport more appealing and understandable to the public.

It is clear, that non equestrians will find difficulty understanding our rules or being up to date with qualification procedures for Olympics or Championships.

Add to it, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), has set guidelines and deadlines for our discipline to evolve in order to remain an Olympic sport and to survive, abiding by sport and commercial requirements.

The most important issue was to make the Equestrian sport, more appealing to spectators, but also to media viewers. As TV rights were being the major source of income to the IOC, Organizing Committees and Host Nations.

Major changes had to be made to the Team Competitions, often confusing to the novice spectators and non-equestrians alike: Why Teams of four athletes and only three results are to count? Why a “**drop score**” and what is really a “drop score”? What are the criteria to drop a score? And why are there Teams with no drop scores?

All these questions locked the equestrian sport in a bubble, only accessible to a happy few and not open to the general public. With this in mind; the FEI has set deadlines to elaborate new requirements to attain this goal.

Why qualify Four Athletes, if only three results would count? Why not bring back Teams of three (like it used to be Three decades ago), with all results counting? Results obtained would be a true reflection of the real result of a given Team, but most importantly, it would open the door to more Flags (countries) to be represented at the Olympics.

You see, at The Olympic Games, the total number of participating athletes **is limited**. And there is only room to **75 equestrian jumping athletes**. Having Teams of Three instead of Four, would open a window of opportunity for other National Federations to qualify their Teams (of Three), keeping the total number of athletes as set by the IOC, unchanged.

Tokyo 2020, will be the Games of the XXXII the Olympiads



**To these Games, distribution of Jumping Athletes will look as follows, according to the new Olympic Equestrian Format:**

20 Teams of Three athletes. (They were 15 Teams of four, as per the old Format)	60 Athletes, from 20 different National Federations (Plus one reserve for each NF).
14 individuals, being the top athletes from each Olympic Group (Seven Groups), according to the Longines Ranking from 01/01/2019, till 31/12/2019.	14 Athletes.
1 Athlete from the NOC with the best ranking in the FEI Olympic Ranking.	1 Athlete.
<b>Total:</b>	<b>75 Athletes.</b>

**What is it in for us, Arabs?**

Under this new Format, Arabs would undoubtedly be gaining lots of advantages:

Two Arab Teams (3 Athletes and 1 reserve) = 6 Arab Athletes.



Egypt and Qatar were able to guarantee their tickets for Tokyo.

They qualified in Rabat (MAR) on October last, during the CSIO-W (4\*), for FEI Olympic Group F, that includes: All Arab countries, Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

(\* ) At the time of going under press, it is not clear if Qatar will be able to send a team. Two of its riders having been tested positive to Carboxy-THC (a prohibited, but specific substance).

**Two Arab Individuals are qualified** according to Olympic Group F Final Ranking, as of 31 December, 2019.

Syria and Jordan have guaranteed an Olympic ticket each = 2 Arab Athletes.

(\* ) The FEI will confirm the final qualification of individual athletes on February 17th, 2020, including of Two Arab Athletes from group F.

Now, Arabs are able to send a total of Eight Athletes to the Games.

For us, developing countries, this new Format is God sent.

National Federations that had never had Olympic hopes could now dream on and start planning.

All this has not gone by without frictions with many



stake holders. It has taken a few years for the ideas to mature and a working plan to be devised.

In the beginning the FEI had to face ferocious opposition, mainly coming from international riders.

These important stake holders of our Sport were (and still are) totally against opening up to new Federations (Flags) to join the most important sport event, arguing the overall level of sport would drop.

**FEI officials faced fierce criticism last year**, during the International Rider's Club, 2019 Annual General Assembly in Rotterdam.

Ingmar De Vos, President of the FEI; Sabrina Ibanez, Secretary General; Stephan Elenbruch, Chairman Jumping Committee and John Roche, Director Jumping Department, were under fire from the riders who disapproved the new Olympic jumping format. During this meeting, FEI officials made sure everything was transparent, understandable and

they put forward explanations, trying to dissipate athletes' concerns.

In June 2019, an Official Test Event was held in Hagen (GER). This event was judged and organized according to the new Olympic Format. A few loop holes were identified and measures were taken to resolve issues and make sure all possible drawbacks will be tackled in due time and averted, before the BIG event, next Summer.

Well, this is where we have reached, since that time when the New Olympic Format was just an idea, until seven months before the kick-off of Tokyo 2020.

We, as Arabs, are all hopes this new Olympic Format will work well. We can only see advantages to it and we are ready to bet on the ever development of equestrian in the Arab countries, with ripe fruits to be picked up before the 2024 Olympics in Paris. 🇸🇦



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