



Jumping

Jumping is undoubtedly the best known of the equestrian disciplines recognised by the FEI where men and women compete as equals in both individual and team events. It is one of the three disciplines in competition at the Olympic Games, the other two being Dressage and Eventing.

Some history

The jumping ability of the horse first began to be developed in the 18th century, when fox hunting required the jumping of the fences that were beginning to be erected to enclose properties. The discipline, as we know it today, developed as a result of competition among fox hunters. The first documented jumping or "leaping" contests, as they were called, were organised in 1866 in Paris and in 1868 in Dublin and were staged over a single high or wide jump. The first large international competition was held in 1902. Jumping became an Olympic discipline at the 1912 Games in Stockholm. Over the next few decades, Jumping was dominated by the military, but with the mechanisation of the army over the years, civilians became more and more prevalent. The decline of the military teams also paved the way for women, who made their first Olympic appearance in Jumping at the 1956 Games in Stockholm.

Modern competitions

In modern Jumping competitions, horse and rider are required to complete a course of 10 to 13 jumps, the objective of which is to test the couple's skill, accuracy and training. The aim is always to jump the course in the designed sequence – all obstacles are numbered – with no mistakes – a clear round. If any part of an obstacle is knocked down or if the horse refuses a jump, "faults" are accumulated. Style is not considered and does not affect the scoring.

The winner of the competition is the horse and rider combination which incur the least number of penalties, complete the course in the fastest time or gain the highest number of points depending on the type of the competition.

Equipment

Riders wear formal dress. Hard hats are compulsory. Whips must be no longer than 75cm and cannot be weighted at the end.

Scoring

The most frequently used scoring table is **Table A**. Each fault is penalised with a certain number of points. Each bar knocked down draws a sanction of 4 points as does the first refusal or baulking (the horse stopping short in front of the jump or going round it). The second baulking or refusal as well as any fall eliminate the horse and rider. The ranking is established according to the penalties obtained. Often, several riders succeed in having a clear round. In this case, there are two possibilities: if the competition does not include a jump off, the competitor with the fastest time wins. If the competition does include a jump off, those tied make a new shorter round against the clock. The winner is the one with the fewest penalties at obstacles, and in the event of a tied score, it is the time of the reduced course that will decide between the competitors.

Competitions judged according to **Table C** are called speed trials as the rankings are established only according to the time. Faults at jumps are converted into penalty seconds which are added to the time taken to complete the course. Depending on the length of the course, one fallen bar may result in 4 penalty seconds. A refusal is only penalised by the waste of time it causes. A second refusal causes elimination, as does the first fall. Victory goes to the rider and horse with the shortest time.

Whatever the type of Table, there is a time limit during which the round must be completed. Riders who do not complete their round in the time allowed are penalised by 1 penalty point per second of excess time. In the case of Table C, the penalties for time exceeded are calculated in seconds.

The course

A typical Jumping course is laid out by an accredited course designer and comprises between 10 to 13 removable timber obstacles erected typically in the form of barriers, fences, gates and balustrades and located in an

enclosed arena. There are five types of obstacles – verticals, spreads, combinations, water jumps and walls. A vertical fence is one where all the poles or planks are in the same vertical plane. Any fence made up of more than one vertical element is a spread. Combinations consist of two or three fences a stride or two apart. Water jumps usually have a low hedge or fence at the leading edge, and competitors must clear the lath at the landing edge. Walls are designed to look like actual brick or stone walls. The jumps are no higher than 1.7m, and the water jumps are no longer than 4.5 m. The size, shape, colour and placement of the obstacles will all have an effect on how the horses and riders succeed.

Before the event begins, riders walk around the course planning the best way to complete it according to the horses' strides and characteristics. They note the different types of fences, their relationships to one another, the footing and any other potential problem areas. They also watch for anywhere a tighter line can save time. A key to running the course is determining the best take-off point for each jump. If it is too far from the jump, the horse will land early and may knock down a rail with its hind legs. If it is too close, the horse will usually hit the fence with its front legs on the way up. After thoroughly analysing the course, riders discuss strategies with their trainers and assistants.

Main competitions

The premier Jumping competitions, in which compete both individuals and teams, are:

The Olympic Games taking place every four years in a bissextile year. The Games of the XXIX Olympiad were staged in 2008 in Hong Kong (CHN). London will be host to the next Olympic Games.

The FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) held every four years in the even years between the Olympic Games. The last edition of the WEG was organised in Aachen (GER) in August 2006. The next edition, the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games will be held in Kentucky (USA) in 2010.

The biannual Continental Championships

FEI World Cup™ Jumping

The FEI World Cup Jumping Series, consisting of primarily indoor competitions held between October and April, is open to individual competitors qualified on the basis of the Rolex Rankings. This series culminates in a yearly final.

Nations Cup

The equestrian world's oldest and most prestigious team competition is the Nations Cup, the history of which dates back to 1909 when a team contest for officers was held in London's Olympia Hall. It is the only competition in which official teams representing nations compare their merit. In order to preserve its special character, there is no individual placing.

In order to increase the interest among the riders, media and spectators, in May 2003 a new part was added to the series in the form of a Top League, where the best eight nations compete in eight top events with a relegation/promotion system between the top league and the qualifying leagues at the end of each season.

In 2009 and 2010, the number of teams was increased to ten teams.

As of 2011, the Top League will once again consist of eight teams.