

# *An interview with* Jaroslav Lacina



*ECAHO President*

by Fabio Brianzoni  
photos by Tutto Arabi archive



Jaroslav & Fabio

**In this February edition of Tutto Arabi we interviewed Mr Jaroslav Lacina, the President of ECAHO. We asked him to give us a preview of what is new for the 2023 season that has just begun.**



**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** Mr. Lacina, there are some changes made during the past few years, including the fact that there is much more emphasis on the welfare aspect, where the Disciplinary Committee will have a more challenging role, due to some additional responsibilities added to their function. Regarding this, can you describe what is changing and what items were discussed at the ECAHO Show Commission meeting in Paris?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** I would have to say that the Disciplinary Committee has always been responsible for horses' welfare and horses' health at the shows. That was the main reason why ECAHO created Disciplinary Committee positions at the shows. The main responsibility is not only to control horses' identity and proper vaccinations schemes, but also to check the current state of the horse and their ability to be presented without any pain, injuries or any other harm. Thus, the role of Disciplinary Committee members at shows is very important. For the upcoming 2023 season, there are some new tasks transferred from judges to the DC members. Specifically, it will be a control of hereditary deceases such as overbite and underbite, and also cryptorchidism. Detailed description will be available in the new Blue Book 2023 (shows rule book of ECAHO). Creation of new rules and regulations is not completed at one meeting only. Any item must go through several discussions at different committees to find a proper solution. There are always many aspects which need to be considered and sometimes the

outcome might take longer than anyone would expect. However, all ECAHO committees are working hard to find a solution to all situations, which can appear during a show. Currently the most discussed item has become about the aggressivity of some horses in the arenas. ECAHO is fully aware of this problem and has already started discussions in order to find a proper solution to this.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** At the Paris Show Commission meeting, the 2023 calendar was approved. In your opinion, is the division of International and National shows well done or are there fewer National shows? Also, regarding International shows in Europe, we see that participation in some shows is on the lower side. Very often they reach around 40 horses entered and sometimes even less. Is there a rule in the Blue Book where in case of a certain number of horses competing is not reached, the show would be downgraded from International B to C?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** Yes, the Show Commission usually approves the show calendar for the upcoming year during the last meeting of the season. I am really pleased that the Show Commission, under the leadership of Mr. Nils Ismer, is focusing on proper discussion of all show dates and division of shows in ECAHO countries. We must realize that Europe and countries outside of Europe have totally opposite issues. In Europe we are lacking horses at shows, but outside of Europe the organizers are usually forced to limit the number of

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horses participating at their shows. It is not always easy to find an appropriate solution, when several shows have date clashes, which does present issues with such a total number of shows during a season. But the committee is doing its best to be fair to everyone. It is correct that there are rules regarding the minimum number of horses at different categories of shows and that shows not fulfilling these requirements might be downgraded. However, ECAHO always considers all aspects and tries to advise before deciding to downgrade a show. As an example, I can mention that some European show organizers have started to organize more shows during one weekend in order to award as many participants as possible, which in return is causing an insufficient number of participants in each of these shows. These organizers are advised to first revise their concept, before any downgrading rules would be applied.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** In 2023 there will be a World Championship in Qatar for the first time. Can you tell us how this decision was arrived at? It is also planned to alternate between Paris and Qatar for three years, in 2023 the World Championship will be held in Qatar, in 2024 in Paris, in 2025 in Qatar and then in 2026 in Paris again. In the future, is there a plan to alternate with other Arab countries, or will the alternation be limited to Qatar, or will the World Championship still return to Paris every year? Do you already have in mind what the future of this competition will look like?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** The idea and the decision to move the World Championship out of Europe was a big surprise to all of us. ECAHO was not informed about this agreement ahead of time, which has caused a lot of unnecessary tension and uncertainty on all sides. After almost 40 years, of the World Championship being organized under the ECAHO affiliation and thereby being shielded by ECAHO rules, officials and



procedures, ECAHO has become an essential part of this event. This experience led at the end to a mutual agreement to approve the possibility to organize the 2023 edition of the World Championship outside of Europe. However, several basic conditions have had to be followed: responsible organizer of the event (CENECA) would remain the same, the right for participants to attend the event regardless of their nationality would remain and a possibility for any country to apply to organize this event in the future. Also, Paris edition should every second year be held, as it has been thus far. For the moment any other future editions of this event are still under discussion.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** In 2022 some shows were cancelled by ECAHO. Can you tell us what the reasons are for cancellations and blacklisting of some shows?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** It is impossible for ECAHO to cancel any show. ECAHO is not the organizer of any shows and thus the shows can only be cancelled by their organizers. However, ECAHO has a clear procedure for blacklisting, in case of shows which do not follow the rules or are not fulfilling criteria for show affiliation. In such cases support from the National association is also quite important and ECAHO always keeps in contact with its representatives, to be able to carefully consider all facts before blacklisting any show. If the decision to blacklist a show has been made, it is usually to protect all participants, horses and also officials who might be officiating at the show.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** Over the years the handlers' license has been introduced, including yellow and red cards. Will there be any other changes regarding handlers? Will there be a licensing requirement? To get this profession to be even more instrumental in ECAHO, might it be a good idea to include a handler representative inside the Executive Committee of ECAHO?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** There is a cooperation in place between ECAHO and handlers' association ITHA (previously ETHA), for several years now. ITHA representatives are regularly attending ECAHO Show Commission meetings, and they are allowed to bring items for discussion or to comment on any agenda points. To find the best solution to any problem one needs to see things from all angles, which makes this cooperation very needed and appreciated. Any other handler representation in ECAHO is impossible right now, due to the ECAHO constitution. Regarding the handlers license, ECAHO requires a handlers license only for A and Title shows for the moment, and the procedure to receive the license is more for legal purposes. However, it would be beneficial to create an international educational system for handlers in the near future, where horse welfare and natural methods of training for show horses would be taught.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni:** We know that at shows there are always happy and unhappy breeders/owners. Many of those who do not win blame the judges. How can ECAHO make breeders/owners trust the integrity of the judges more, who obviously do not have an easy job? Could a popular jury of experts be created within the big shows?

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** To me there is no popular or unpopular jury. What is important for a good outcome of any show is the composition of individual judges.





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Their individual knowledge, experience and integrity plays the main role for fair results in a show. Moreover, judges are shaping the breed, so we must keep an eye on its general development. ECAHO is fully aware of these needs and aspects, which is why ECAHO is constantly improving its judges' educational system. Next to it, an ongoing system of training the already accepted judges must be regularly provided. These are procedures which have already been implemented in ECAHO judges' educational system. However, what is new for the upcoming year is an introduction of

the Judges consulting group, which is an independent subcommittee having the right to discuss individual judges scores from ECAHO affiliated shows. Judges might then be questioned, and their explanations and actions evaluated. Another very often discussed item is conflict of interest. Process of conflict of interest declaration is strictly followed and is valid for all officials at shows. Credibility should therefore be important not only to ECAHO, but to everyone who is taking an active role in the whole show scene. We are aware that there are several indications, that some individuals are bringing credibility in question, however without any clear proof of this, ECAHO has very limited possibilities to act on these indications. For this reason, I am not particularly pleased about public claims of corruption, without anyone providing any evidence in support of these claims. This is mainly causing an unnecessary space for uninformed speculations and is mostly bringing in question the hard work of those who are trying to be correct and fair. Another thing which is deeply unfortunate is a common negative presence happening at several shows. In the past people were enjoying the performance and the happiness of their horses in the arena, and the prizes were just a cherry on the cake. These days, very often, the second place or a silver medal is not at all appreciated anymore. The stress under which some horses and handlers are under seems almost unbearable. While I understand that horse training and showing horses costs a lot of money, especially these days, the joy from horses and fair competition should still remain.

**Mr Fabio Brianzoni: What are your wishes for the upcoming 2023 season?**

**Mr Jaroslav Lacina:** That would be stronger regulations which help in protecting the horses, making the shows more attractive for people to participate in and above all bring the joy of showing horses again. This can only be achieved with everyone's cooperation and where we unite in changing things for the better. □