

Are You a Club Member or a Badge Wearer?

This little article has been unashamedly plagiarized from an internet site of a square dance club in the US and adapted for dressage! Whilst it may sound as though we are on our soap box, it seems rather pertinent at a time when much consideration is being given as to the direction the committee sees the club taking.

With our huge membership base and very small volunteer group, do we just stick to our 6 competitions a year, charge a bit more and pay for the draw, event set-up, marshalling, scoring, newsletter and club administration to be done, or do we rethink the meaning of "club" and provide a broader experience with clinics, seminars, social functions, support for young and elite riders, the Franz Mairinger Championships and of course a friendly relaxing low pressure arena for competition in the context that can only be provided through a club with some level of participation from all? Please give some thought to what you can put back to the club. Doing just one job at one comp day per year can make all the difference if enough people contribute.

The Webster dictionary defines "member" as a "person who has been admitted to the responsibilities and the privileges of an association or enterprise." Are **YOU** a Club Member or just a badge wearer? Do you wholeheartedly and enthusiastically accept and join in the functions of your club? Usually your enjoyment of dressage and all it encompasses is enhanced through your personal involvement.

What are the responsibilities you should be willing to accept when joining a club? Probably number one is just to "BE THERE". Your consistent attendance is a sign of your loyalty. Be there with a smile - not only on your face, but also in your heart. Be an enthusiastic host making everyone feel welcome.

Support your club financially. Survival depends upon financial support of each and every member in consistent attendance. Your attire as well as your conduct should uphold the very best principles of the sport of dressage.

Your willingness and availability to volunteer whenever needed in whatever capacity: as a penciller, runner, bringing along a cake for our volunteers, as a gear steward, assisting in the office, selling raffle tickets, handing out ribbons and test papers, helping at a clinic and so forth. Excuses of inexperience are not valid. As a first timer, your newness will bring fresh ideas and chance to try what others have been reluctant to try. Of course, there are always people available to guide you in the right direction.

Do not be afraid of being a member, wearing a multiple number of badges proves nothing. Dedication, enthusiasm, the ability to communicate and a willingness to respect the opinions and talents of others are all signs of being a member.

Enjoy being a member. Actually you may find being one is not very difficult. Participation is probably the prime quality that identifies you as a member. The rewards may surprise you.

