



July 24, 2019

Dear Members of the Eventing Community,

It has been a busy month for the U.S. Eventing Team as we have been in the final stages of preparing for the Pan American Games, which take place Aug. 1-4 in Lima, Peru. The U.S. team consists of Boyd Martin and Tsetserleg, Tamie Smith and Mai Baum, Doug Payne and Starr Witness, and Lynn Symansky and RF Cool Play, with Liz Halliday-Sharp and Cooley Quicksilver as the traveling reserve. I believe the U.S. team is set up well for the Pan American Games, in large part because our country is very fortunate to have such wonderful donors, owners, and supporters in the sport of eventing. The quality of horses and riders at the top of the sport gives the U.S. an advantage at a championship like the Pan American Games, as there is a broad pool of horse and rider combinations capable of producing competitive results.

Our main goal at the Pan American Games is to win a gold or silver medal in the team competition, which will secure qualification for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In order to achieve this goal, decisions must be consistently made with the team first in mind. I feel extremely confident in the character of the riders representing the U.S. in Lima. The goal of the High Performance program is to create not only incredible athletes, but also leaders. Boyd Martin and Lynn Symansky have represented the U.S. on teams before, and Tamie Smith and Doug Payne are getting their first opportunity to ride on a championship team. The combination of these four riders creates a very strong team.

The final preparation competition for the Pan American Games team took place at the Maryland Horse Trials in Adamstown, Maryland, on July 5-7. All of the horses and riders had a strong final run and looked in top form. Our final training camp took place this week on July 24-26 at Stable View Farm in Aiken, South Carolina. The horses will ship out to Lima from Miami, so Aiken served as an ideal geographical location for the team's final training camp. The main purpose of a training camp is to get the team together, let the horses and riders settle in, and put the finishing touches on their work to give them the best possible chance for peak performance. Dressage coach James Burtwell taught a day of dressage lessons, and the riders also had access to Stable View's show jumping arenas and cross country course.

One of the most important parts of coaching is learning the horses' and riders' personalities, and a training camp is an ideal time to delve further into the personalities on a team. Just as human athletes have their strengths and weaknesses, equine athletes do as well. Truly understanding a horse's personality can be the difference between having a very good horse and a champion that will win medals. The personality within a horse is what gives him the chance to be consistently brilliant.



There is a difference between a horse's traits and a horse's personality, and I like to look closely at the personality. For example, some horses have very outward personalities, which makes them alert and expressive. This can be both a blessing and a curse in dressage. The expressiveness gives them an edge that might catch the judge's eye, but the alertness could result in more distraction than a horse who is naturally more inward and quiet. There are strengths and weaknesses of all types of personalities, and it takes special attention to detail to notice a horse's personality and to be able to use it as an advantage in a competition setting. Similarly, some athletes are extraverted and occasionally have to be reminded to focus, whereas other athletes are introverted and occasionally have to be reminded to lighten up and enjoy the moment.

When people ask me what I do, I feel so lucky to say that I spend all day working in the sport that I love. Since starting in this role, I have watched the riders grow in their understanding of how to be successful as a team. We also have access to quality trainers who are imperative to the team's success. While we did not have the result we wanted at last year's FEI World Equestrian Games, I firmly believe change is coming.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Duvander'.

Erik Duvander