

IFCS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS – JUDGES REPORT by BOB GRIFFIN

I was on my way to set up our UKA Cornwall show last August when I got the call from Greg to say that I was to be the British judge for the IFCS World Championships in May 2010. As you can imagine I was both honoured and over the moon to be given the chance of a lifetime to be the first British judge to judge at a WC event on home soil.

From then on my head was spinning constantly with ideas for sections of courses and especially what my gamble would be in the Gamblers class. One section in particular kept cropping up in my mind and that was the tunnel under the A-Frame to a tunnel under the DW and then on to weaves which eventually became part of my Agility course. I also had to swot up on their rules which are slightly different from ours.

After a lot of experimenting with designs on paper, on the computer and then set up in my field over the winter my ideas for the Jumping, Gamblers and Agility courses began to take shape. I then had to put the final touches to them before submitting them to Steve Drinkwater in Australia one month before the event as well as writing some very comprehensive notes for the Gamblers class which was sent out to all the IFCS member countries 2 weeks before the show so that they had time to translate into their own language and study it prior to the competition.

With my wife Cyd we drove from Cornwall to the venue at the Hand Equestrian Centre, Clevedon on Weds afternoon, then stayed the night at a hotel just 5 mins drive away. On Thurs we watched a few of the teams practising before attending the excellent Gala Dinner in the evening where we were dazzled by the bright orange outfits of the Dutch team. On Friday morning I was up early as we had to be at the venue for 7.30 a.m. Having only had time for a cup of coffee and a biscuit it was straight into the opening ceremony at 8.00 which didn't take long and then it was time for me to fine-tune my first Jumping class (Team Triathlon) which Paul Hinchley and his ring party had set up for me and before I had the chance to get too worried it was time for the first dog to enter the ring. Unfortunately there were several eliminations before a dog got round albeit with some faults but there were 3 really good clear rounds from Russia, USA & Canada.

The last dog to run in the maxi height collided with her American handler who fell rather heavily onto her elbow between jumps 3 & 4. She tried to get up but was in too much pain and the medics had to treat her where she was and after what seemed like forever she was taken off to hospital with a badly dislocated elbow. During this time it made me realise how nervous the competitors had been and they seemed to have put a lot of pressure on themselves resulting in handling errors causing the eliminations. This also put some pressure on me as I had expected more handlers to go for it rather than being over-cautious. However there were several really good clears in the other height categories especially the Minis & Midis.

This was the first part of the Team event the Russians ended up in first & second places with no dogs being eliminated and just 5 faults overall. Once this class was over I could now relax, have some breakfast and watch the dogs compete in the Snooker & Agility classes.

Sat morning meant another early start as the judges had to attend a Team Managers meeting at 7.30 a.m. in case there were any queries prior to the classes starting. Wim Bekendam from Holland was the first judge in the ring with the Biathlon jumping class and I was thinking about my Gamblers

course as well as calming a rather anxious wife down as she was going to be scribing for me. I enjoy running in Gamblers as a competitor but it can be a bit hairy as a judge as you don't know where the handler is going and there were a few occasions when the handler, Cyd and I nearly ended up on a collision course much to the amusement of the spectators! On one round the handler didn't hear the whistle and took us both by surprise when she kept running past us doing the contacts instead of going for the gamble. However all's well that ends well and there were some really exciting rounds and gambles which everybody enjoyed watching. This was probably my favourite class as the handlers really went for it and most attempted the 15 point gamble. Again Russia excelled with 7 out of 12 medals but it was good to see Marilyn Adams & Dawn Weaver take silver and bronze. Also Hisato Tanabe was so excited when he won gold in the Toy height class as I believe that he is usually the Team Coach rather than running a dog.

One thing which is different here from any other show is that competitors are allowed to dispute a judge's decision! I believe each team is allowed 3 disputes a day which must be on an official form and lodged within 15-30 minutes of the class finishing. All the runs are videoed and the judge and IFCS officials will discuss each case as well as looking at the video evidence before calling the Team Manager and giving a verdict. Luckily the only time I had missed something was a jump in the Gamblers class worth 1 point which was duly corrected.

As I was judging last on Sunday we were able to have a lie-in and a leisurely breakfast before making our way to the show. Janet Gauntt from America was on first followed by Wim and I was judging the final Agility course of the Championships which was the Individual Biathlon and was run in reverse order after the first run over a jumping course the previous day. This was the last chance to win a medal and again I could sense the pressure. After some really good rounds in the first three levels it was all down to the Midi dogs and the tension was building as we got down to the final three to run and they were all from Russia. Maria Tomilova stepped up to the line in the bronze medal position and went clear. The penultimate handler was Svetlana Kondrashova who did a cracking clear round so the final handler Elena Kochetova had to go for broke to win the Gold medal and that is exactly what she did. Her dog "Excellent" really lived up to his name! This was a fantastic end to the whole event and I have to admit it brought a tear to my eye as I left the ring.

To sum up this was a wonderful experience which I really enjoyed and I would like to congratulate Mark Laker and the Steering Committee for all their hard work in organising the event, Paul Hinchley for running the ring so efficiently with his ring parties, Lucie Hincley and her team for looking after us so well at the show, Iris Richards who ran the office, Anthony Clarke for time-keeping the Gambler's class and everyone else who did their bit to make it "the best run WAC so far" (Steve Drinkwaters' words) and I will definitely second that. Congratulations also to the GB team who put in some really good runs and came away with 13 medals.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Cyd, for all her help and support both before and during the show and Greg & Laura Derrett for hosting this prestigious event.