

Wow, what a shock it was to come home from the USDF convention and what I thought was warm, sunny San Diego (60-70 degrees) to my lovely Colorado home where it was 6 degrees when I stepped off the airplane in my flip flops. Now, if you know me a little, I tend to wear flip flops even in the winter if the temps are above 30, but gosh – it was a brutal difference!

The 2011 USDF Convention marked a couple of major milestones for the sport of dressage. First, we approved the establishment of a National Championships, to begin in 2013 in Kentucky for 2-3 years and then to rotate westward. This is a huge step and should be fun to watch take shape. Our Regional Championship participants will now feed into the National Championships. The second milestone this year was the USDF Symposium, which brought together all four of our National USEF Coaches and many many top riders and some pretty phenomenal horses. We also had a chance to watch our Coaches work with several amateurs, junior/young riders and some horses that most of us have in our back yard. It was intense, informative and down to earth. Maybe someday we'll do this again and I for one can't wait!

Mark your calendar for next year's USDF Convention in New Orleans December 5-8, 2012. There will be no symposium, but there will be many wonderful educational sessions and the annual awards dinner.

One thing that is continually a focus for USDF is the growth of our sport and maintenance of our current membership. We are looking to promote more use of the Opportunity classes that were introduced by USEF to the dressage world not long ago. Opportunity classes allow folks to show at USDF/USEF recognized competitions without having any membership requirements to USDF or USEF for the rider, owner, horse and trainer and the drug fee does also not have to be paid. Introductory classes also do not require memberships, but they do require the payment of the drug fee. If you cross enter out of the Intro classes or the Opportunity classes into regular dressage classes, then all membership requirements do stand for the regular classes. Opportunity classes can be offered at Level 1, 2 and 3 shows, with Training through Second being allowed at Level 1, Training and First at Level 2, and Training at Level 3. They are a great way to introduce dressage to our Pony Clubbers, 4-H folks, eventers who want to get more time in the dressage or hunter/jumpers who need some flat work or a change of pace. Opportunity classes can really draw more folks in to our sport from other disciplines and give them a taste for our passion.

Till next month!
Heather Petersen

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