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Compete Easy Comes to Maryland

Paperless Event Scoring Debuts at the Maryland Horse Trials' MDHT II

On July 10 & 11, the Maryland Horse Trials entered a new realm by going paperless in its scoring for all three phases of its event, the first time for a horse trial in the United States. Not only was scoring paperless, it was also truly live, allowing competitors, families and fans to follow along up to the minute, rather than waiting for a website to be updated at random. Australia's beloved competition management system, Nominate, had come to Maryland as Compete Easy.

When Maryland's Governor Hogan began relaxing COVID-19 restrictions on outdoor sports such as horseback riding, Carolyn Mackintosh, owner and organizer of the Maryland Horse Trials, began looking for ways to keep interaction between people to a minimum. Competitors were thrilled with the opportunity to compete again, but Carolyn realized the same was not true for the volunteers, many of whom were hesitant to work in close contact with others. An article by Captain Mark Phillips in a British eventing magazine about a popular paperless entry and competition management system in Australia caught her attention, and Carolyn contacted the company to learn more.

In the early 2000s, one of the founders of Compete Easy, a long-time eventer, admitted that he had a problem... he was terrible at getting in his entries to competitions on time and properly. He also realized that events had a similar problem... letting competitors know their times and other information in a timely fashion. It really hit home when he sent off his entry to the Melbourne Three-Day Event and he did not hear back to find out if his entry was accepted. Three days before the jog, he still hadn't heard. It was a two-day drive from his home in Queensland to Melbourne, so he called the show secretary who confessed that she was a little backed up, but he had been accepted. Widespread use of internet was still nascent, but he saw its potential and started asking event secretaries if they would mind if he tried a new way to send in entries using the internet, and thus began what is known as Nominate in Australia (Compete Easy in North America). Eventers in Australia don't send in their entries to a competition, they Nominate them.

Security Matters

Entering competitions online is nothing new. Competitors love the ease of having their information stored in one place. For competition management, online entries still have to be checked for completeness and accuracy, which requires a lot of staff hours. One of the features that Carolyn really appreciated about Compete Easy was that "a competitor can't complete sending an entry until all the paperwork is uploaded." In other words, no signature pages? A competitor's entry is not yet in. Carolyn added that "the staff can focus on other things when they are not spending their time checking to make sure that a competitor has all the paperwork complete." No more posting on the website lists of missing items from each competitor.

While the convenience factor makes online entry systems popular, the security of competitors' information and the integrity

of the results are paramount. The FEI has a list of certified system and IT providers (<https://inside.fei.org/fei/your-role/it-services/it-providers/list>) and Compete Easy is one of only three providers certified for eventing. Certification is not a simple process.

Trying It Out

Always the innovator, Carolyn liked what she heard from the staff at Compete Easy and decided to try the system at her winter derbies. Competitors would enter the derbies through Compete Easy. They could check into the show upon arrival through the Compete Easy app on their phones, which helped reduce contact with the office staff, a necessity during the pre-vaccine days of COVID-19. Because the derbies are a hybrid competition, Compete Easy programmers worked to adapt the scoring system to the derby requirements. Volunteer jump judges downloaded the Compete Easy app onto their phones or tablets and scored riders electronically.

To see how regular volunteer scribes and judges would adapt to the electronic scoring, Loch Moy hosted pop-up schooling shows. Local riders had the chance to ride in an easy-going show, while judges and scribes practiced the new system. Translating the time-honored role of the dressage scribe from ink and paper to computer sounds complicated, but the Compete Easy system opted for writing on a tablet, rather than typing on a computer. For the scribe, it's a more familiar method, and Compete Easy even lets the scribe choose for left or right handed and fine tune the stylus control.

Because of the time difference, the staff in Australia connected Carolyn to Helen Richardson of Oakhurst Farm in Canada. Helen had used Compete Easy for her shows and liked it so much that she was hired to become the North American representative. "Helen was great!" said Carolyn "She could walk us through the system and she understood the issues our competitors had when using the app. She could look at our classes in real time and help us correct any problems."

Once everyone was comfortable, Carolyn began using the Compete Easy system at other Loch Moy events, like the PYTPYT Dressage and Jumper shows, as well as the starter horse trials.

There's An App For That

Anyone who has ever competed or worked at a horse trial with "live scoring" knows that "live" is a relative term. Scores are entered on to paper sheets in all phases and then brought back to the office periodically and entered in to a scoring program and then - finally - uploaded to a website. The Compete Easy app removes all of the paper handling and the scores are entered directly in to an app at the source, meaning that scores can be actually live. Movement by movement, and jump

by jump. This type of "live scoring" is something we have never had before.

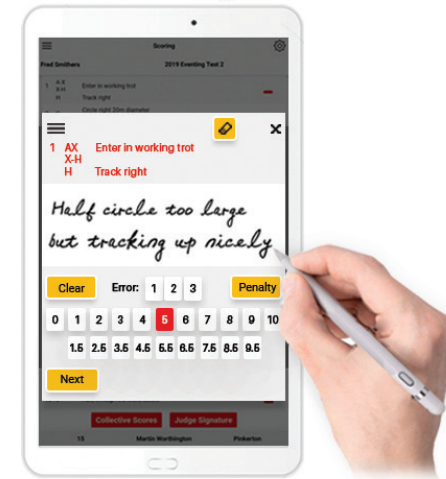
No Internet - No Problem.

Other systems rely on a permanent internet connection in order to process scores. The Compete Easy system is based on apps, so if the internet drops out or the user is in a spot where

cell coverage is patchy they can still keep scoring. Of course, if you have access to the internet from your judging positions, the scores go live instantly.

Dressage comments are written by the scribe - not typed

The Compete Easy system is the only system in the world that allows scribes to write the judges comments using a stylus. Everybody can write, but not many people can touch type. Riders get their dressage test sheets sent to them electronically, and these sheets look just like a paper test sheet.



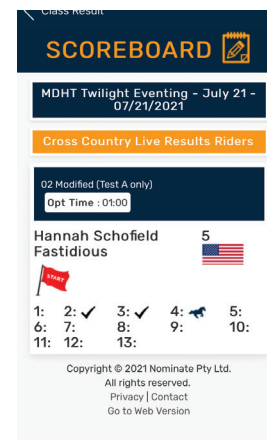
The dressage scribe has an intuitive interface with the scoring app. If all the movements in the test do not have a score, the app displays a message that a score is missing and must be input before moving on to the next test.

The entries side of things

The beauty of the Compete Easy app is that not only does it allow volunteers to enter their scores, it also gives competitors control of their entries. Under most entry systems, any changes have to be made by management, leading to the proliferation of the dreaded "change fee." Under the Compete Easy system, until the event is scheduled, competitors can easily make their own changes, without having to go to the office staff.

Taking the Plunge

Once the staff, volunteers and competitors were fairly comfortable with Compete Easy, it was time to use it at a United States Eventing Association Recognized Horse Trial. MDHT II, July 10 & 11, was scheduled to be that horse trial. Compete Easy



Friends and family can watch a competitor's progress jump by jump.

the system.

Compete Easy has arrived in the United States. Up and down the east coast, shows are following the lead of the Maryland Horse Trials and are trying out the program, and seeing how easy it is to go paperless.



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