

Inter-Africa Vaulting Cup 2008

March 22-24 South Africa hosted the annual Inter-Africa Vaulting Cup with 86 vaulters representing clubs from South Africa, Mauritius, Zambia, Malawi and Swaziland. Both D and E grade competitions (in which the horses walk) were offered to the 23 teams: a great turn out considering the IAC started as recently as 2006 and with just 4 teams.

Interest in Vaulting is spreading rapidly in Group IX thanks in no small part to the enthusiasm and selfless efforts of the volunteer body behind the Inter Africa Cup. Their success to date is evidenced not only in the increases in numbers of participating countries but equally in the increase in number of teams and additional grades offered each year.



The Inter Africa Cup demonstrates the capacities of Vaulting as a development sport: so much can be achieved with a small number of horses and as an easily accessible discipline it offers a wealth of opportunities to young athletes from all backgrounds.

Eight of this year's teams were development teams: composed of vaulters from disadvantaged backgrounds. Karen McGowan, Malawi's National Vaulting Representative, brought two teams of young vaulters mostly from rural Malawi. Many of these children had never been in a car before, let alone a plane; for some this was also a first experience of hot baths and proper beds. In Karens own words, "They had the time of their lives ... most of our vaulters have no exposure to television, they loved it - we're all over the moon."

Mary Binks, National Chairman Horse Association of Kenya Deputy Chairman FEI Group IX was also present at the event. "Vaulting has a valuable place in Equestrian Sport particularly for developing federations" she said, "especially in the areas of teamwork, discipline, athleticism, rhythm and the care and welfare of the horses".

As a first contact with horse-sport Vaulting teaches many of the basic skills of horsemanship with the additional benefit of a very definite emphasis right from the beginning on creating and maintaining the harmony between horse and athlete. Listening to and working with the horse are key to achieving anything even at the most basic level of the sport. Team Vaulting takes learning a step farther as vaulters must learn to co-operate and respect others in order to ensure the team works together as a unit with the horse.



Swaziland

The FEI Vaulting Department is currently working on a development plan specifically in response to the interest and enthusiasm within Group IX: the main objective being to

support initiatives already undertaken in such a way as to ensure the sustainable growth and development of the discipline within the region.



“The atmosphere and spirit were amazing; everybody was involved and teams shared horses and coaches, fun and games, meals and chores” - Michele du Plessis Hay

Structured actions to ensure an increase in the coaching and judging capacity are to be put in place over the coming months. This will improve the quality of Vaulting and ultimately assist the evolution to international competition level which in turn will allow access to world events for vaulters from all over Africa.



Mauritius (right)



Soweto (left)