Knowing Your Role at the Competition

The Difference Between Trainer and Coach

When entering a USEF competition, it is required that all participants sign the entry blanks and indicate their role as participant; whether it be as rider, trainer, coach, owner, handler, vaulter, etc. In recent years, there has been a lot of discussion about knowing the difference between trainer and coach. The ramification(s) for not correctly identifying the difference could be significant. For example, a trainer is considered the responsible party when a drub positive or overage is found and may be subject to possible penalties as a result of the overage or positive; however, someone whose actions show they are just a coach of the rider on the horse that was tested may not be held responsible.

The definitions of the two are:

- **Trainer** – Any adult who has or shared the responsibility for the care, training, custody, condition or performance of the horse.

  In the event that a minor is a trainer of their own horse, the parent would be considered the responsible party under Federation rules.

- **Coach** – Any person who has or shares the responsibility for instructing, teaching, schooling or advising a rider, owner, driver, handler or vaulter in equestrian skills.

There is a distinct difference between the two since one is responsible for the HORSE and the other is responsible for the HUMAN. Moreover, that distinction depends on the actions of the individual, so just signing an entry blank as "coach" does not preclude responsibility as a "trainer" if the individual has acted as a "trainer" for a give horse.

Below are two common scenarios. These obviously do not encompass the variety of scenarios that may occur, and ultimately the best way to determine the difference between coach and trainer is to read and follow the rules.

A horse is stabled at Mary's (owner) farm until the competition. Sue (trainer or coach) periodically comes to Mary's farm and works with the horse, but does not give instruction to Mary. When the horse gets to the competition, it is stabled with the rest of Sue's client horses. Sue's grooms feed and take care of the horse while it is at the competition. Sue would be considered a trainer in this scenario because she has a role in the training, care, custody and condition of the horse.

Sue has another client, Kim, who owns her own barn. Sue travels to Kim's barn once a week and gives Kim riding lessons. When they go to the competition, Kim stables her horse with the rest of Sue's client horses; however, Kim feeds, medicates, and takes care of her horse while at the competition. Sue goes to the ring to assist Kim when she shows. Sue would be considered the coach in the scenario if her role is only to instruct and assist the rider. She should not sign as trainer if she is not involved with the training, custody, care or condition or the horse – even if the horse is stabled with her at the competition.

Individuals should be cautioned not to sign as trainer for someone in an effort to reserve a stabling spot or because someone else has failed to sign since liability for the horse becomes that individual's burden once they sign on the trainer line.

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