

## President's report: 2020-2021



2020-2021 has been a busy season, consisting of a Winter Series (cut short to one competition due to the re-emergence of COVID Alert Level 2 shortly prior to the first of the competition days and a lack of time for the committee to adequately prepare), two new winter training opportunities, and five two day tournaments spread from the end of October to the end of March, as well as the group reaching its 50<sup>th</sup> year milestone.

Firstly, however, I wish to wholeheartedly thank the Organising Committee for the 2020-2021 season. We were a mix of seasoned committee members and a number of new committee members. Without this hard working group of diverse individuals, the group would have been unable to provide those who compete at Dressage Southland events the opportunities that occurred.

In particular, I give sincere thanks, and appreciation, to our outgoing Area Judge's Officer, Noelene Keen. Noelene has been part of the backbone of the group for a significant number of years and has ensured that our riders have appropriately qualified judges sitting in vehicles as we dance with our ponies, and that we have up and coming judges being trained and encouraged. As a group, we wish Noelene all the best and we know that she will continue to be a supporter of Dressage Southland. I'm sure we will see her officiating at our tournaments, and in other areas, next season and beyond.

We have some Organising Committee members who are also stepping aside from their positions this year: myself as President, Sponsorship Officer and Facebook/Social Media coordinator, and Peggy Angus-Cook as Writer's Coordinator. Peggy, thank you for your tireless efforts this season, it has been greatly appreciated.

The 2020-2021 has really had an element of Forest Gump's 'box of chocolates', we never knew entirely what we were going to get! In summary, here are some of the 'chocolates' (and please forgive me if I miss anything out):

New learning: developing our COVID response action plans so that we could ensure the safe, and effective, hosting of competitions should we be placed at COVID Alert Level Two. Many of you here will be involved in other sporting and non-sporting organisations and will be aware of the ever changing (certainly at the start) requirements from the government. On top of that, our governing body, ESNZ, and Sport New Zealand also had their requirements, which then had to be further 'tweaked' by Dressage NZ. Thankfully, there were plenty of webinars and training opportunities available and I was fortunate enough to be asked to help proof and give feedback on the DNZ initial material and guidelines whilst they were in the development phase. Although, as individuals, the Organising Committee members have personal opinions about the global pandemic and how the government was addressing the issue, in our collective role as stewards of the group, we were able to pull together and develop effective processes to ensure that we could safely operate under Alert Level 2 conditions. Mind you, we did always think that we would know in advance of a tournament if we would have to transition to AL2. I don't think any of us thought that, at around 9pm on the

Saturday evening of our February tournament, that we would have to run under AL2 conditions by 6am the very next morning. I would like to give particular thanks to Corinne Ward and Peggy Angus-Cook for their sterling efforts as we worked into the very small hours of Sunday morning to ensure that we could still hold the second day of our February tournament. I'd also like to recognise the judges at that tournament for stepping up to the challenge of judging and writing, simultaneously, on the Sunday and for all of our competitors who followed the AL 2 requirements without a grumble. For me, it was a highlight of the season as it truly demonstrated what our sport is about: working together to achieve a common goal.

#### Celebrations:

- Dressage Southland's 50<sup>th</sup> year, celebrated at a function at the prize giving at the Harper Horse Coaches and Floats Dressage Southland Championship Premier League tournament in December, and also later today with a celebratory luncheon
- Full sponsorship of all levels for the season, and for two tournaments
- Julia Latham and Tracie Donnelly starting their judging journey and Fiona Sharp strongly continuing hers
- Strong successes of Southland riders in the South Island and National League series
- Highly positive feedback from sponsors and riders
- Our highest number of non-graded riders at our March tournament competing in the O level tests (higher than the usual numbers from the final season where Level 1 & 2 tests were offered to non-graded riders)
- The generosity of our wider community when individuals were in need

Hardships - the accidents, ill health and passing of new and past members of the area group

#### Challenges:

- Encouraging new faces to join the OC and/or put their hands up for smaller supporting roles
- Fiscal management in a year in which no fundraising for the group took place
- Succession planning
- Strategic and budgeting planning (which are both impacted significantly by the three points above)

In conclusion, as I step down from my roles, I wish to thank all members of our area group for your support and encouragement. I have been particularly humbled by the many lovely comments I have received over the season. I wish the area group all the best for the future and I know that the 2021-2022 Organising Committee will do a fabulous job.

Sonja Swale  
2020-2021 President, Dressage Southland