



## Simon Bates

### Sport Operations Director candidate

I have been involved in dressage since 1996, mostly as an organiser, including two terms on BD's Rules and Fixtures Committee, and my current position as Sports Operations Director. I owned and ran Keysoe from its formation until sale of the business at the end of 2020, having grown it from small family farm to successful international competition centre.

My first term as Sports Operations Director has not seen as much evolution of our sport as I would have liked, as the worldwide pandemic rather affected progress, with the main priority and focus being on maintaining rather than progressing the sport during those times. We have still made good progress (with more to come) in balancing the sections and pathways, particularly for Silver riders, and offering a range of opportunities for every individual. This is being achieved through steady progress, without massive changes and bombshells appearing with each new handbook. We now have two seasons of Area Festivals, while Quest becoming a 12-month competition is the beginnings of evolution of that part of the sport. Our elite calendar of Premier, High Profile and International shows is also growing into new venues to meet increased demand.

Moving forward, our sport needs to widen the base at grass roots level by increasing the reach of Quest. This is our product that interfaces the most with the unaffiliated market. It is an affordable and consistent product to bring riders in to British Dressage, but we need a way to bring in venues where there is low existing quest membership. We also need new venues where there is an existing market, without damaging the venues that are already there. We have seen from the recent survey of members that MyQuest is a more popular product than TeamQuest, and so we need to find a way for individuals to be able to compete in two tests at the same level at a show. The Associated Championships are another important route into the sport, and these need to be able to continue to grow and allow more breeds and types to come into this competition.

We should be encouraging and assisting unaffiliated organisers to follow a consistent set of our rules, and to adhere to all of our welfare standards, to help the natural transition through to affiliated competition. Good unaffiliated sport is good for the affiliated sport. New members, venues and judges come through from the unaffiliated market, and our members use unaffiliated competition to prepare and consolidate their training outside of BD's recorded results.

We need to make the transition from unaffiliated to affiliated dressage, and from Club to Full as simple as possible, and to remove any intimidation that people feel when they look in from the outside. This is an inclusive, welcoming, and supportive sport, and we need to make sure that message is clear for all to see. We do need to grow our online learning and information, and a relaunch and rebrand of the "BD at Home" content that worked through COVID as a vehicle to draw riders in, and to grow riders within our sport.

Full members need a simplification of the pathways for Regionals and Area Festivals. It needs to be an easy and natural choice for a rider who is nearing the top of Area Festival Silver, to choose between moving up an AF level or moving to the Regional route at their current level. At present, it is more complicated than necessary. The qualification structure for both needs to follow a similar template, which is a number of scores exceeding a set percentage.

The sport will change with the needs of both its equine welfare and sustainability challenges. Both will fairly equally affect the way sport evolves in future.

For equine welfare, I would like to see horse injury managed in the same way that human injury is recorded, whereby any serious injury that results in a horse not being able to compete for a time can be recorded. We should have provision that horse membership can be extended where a horse is off for a reported injury, when accompanied by a veterinary certificate, so that there is no commercial pressure on the recuperation and recovery period. This will also give an opportunity to monitor the different types of injury and the frequency that these injuries occur within dressage horses.

Sustainability needs to grow as a priority, with a clear hierarchy of implementation. BD as an organisation should develop and implement best practices at its head office, and with its own network of staff and volunteers, then implementing best practices at the Championship shows run by British Dressage, before taking these refined and implemented ideas and best practices, and offering them to our members, venues, centres, and yards.

British Dressage is now well established as a charity, so with a healthy Reserves position we should also be looking at further investment in our charitable aims and objectives that fulfil a wider remit for the sport as a whole.