



**Austin Dressage Unlimited (ADU) 5th Annual
"Improving Your Judging Eye & Showing Skills"
"From the View of the FEI Judge General"
featuring Stephen Clarke**

February 8–9, 2014 Southwestern University campus, Georgetown, Texas
(photos may be seen at: <http://www.austindressageunlimited.org/photos2014.html>)

- 1st Annual ADU Judging Seminar in 2010 with Gary Rockwell – 70 registrants
- 2nd Annual ADU Judging Seminar in 2011 with Maryal Barnett – 70 registrants
- 3rd Annual ADU Judging Seminar in 2012 with Hilda Gurney – 90 registrants
- 4th Annual ADU Judging Seminar in 2013 with Christoph Hess – 105 registrants
- 5th Annual ADU Judging Seminar in 2014 with Stephen Clarke – 114 registrants**

My recent visit to Austin Dressage Unlimited, prompted by the indefatigable Carol Schmickrath! was one of the most perfectly organized judge's seminars I have ever had the pleasure to conduct. The entire team in Austin work selflessly for the sport, and went 'above and beyond the call of duty' to ensure that all the participants were treated to the warmest hospitality and were fully informed and involved in the proceedings.

I can truly say that this was one of the most enjoyable experiences of my Dressage career.

Most sincerely,

Stephen Clarke

FEI Judge General

President of IDOC

Austin Dressage Unlimited (ADU) Judging Seminars continue to grow and become more popular each year. This year's seminar had attendees traveling from most states within our USDF Region 9 – Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas. But we were also proud to welcome attendees from as far away as Missouri and Virginia.

Several rows of priority seating front & center were reserved for the 27 Judges & L Graduates who attended this seminar as "full participants." These full participants were treated to lunch with Stephen Clarke on Saturday in a specially reserved private room in the University's café. Another row at the front of the large lecture hall was designated for our Junior/YR dressage enthusiasts. They were also treated by ADU to lunch with Stephen in a private room on Sunday.

In between, all of the attendees were treated with good old Texas hospitality. ADU, along with several other GMOs in the region (ADA, BACH, CTDS, DDC, ODS), sponsored the morning coffee service on Saturday for the attendees. Altho at one point we thought there might be a riot when we ran out of creamer for the coffees. Thank God for cell phones, I couldn't punch the numbers in fast enough to order more creamer be brought to the lecture hall immediately! So no blood was shed. The GMOs' funding also provided endless bottles of water that were kept available for attendees at all times both days. One of ADU's Eventing members, Kirsten Lotter, funded small bags of snacks for each attendee to help keep energy levels high. Several ADU board members also brought large plates & bowls of homemade treats, with not a crumb left at the end of

the day, except for in the carpet on the floor. Never fear, one ADU member brought a small vacuum so that at the end of the day we could hide the evidence from the University maintenance crew and not be in trouble. We definitely want to come back to this amazing lecture hall in future years for our Seminars. Every seat in the house is good and the audio/visual equipment in the lecture hall is quite impressive.

In the section with reserved seating for USEF judges and USDF “L” graduates, the 27 participants sat in rapt concentration. Auditors did the same. On Saturday Mr. Clarke used the USDF series of DVDs, “On the Levels” as well as his own series, “Through the Eye of the Judge.” He coached the judges on the thought process needed for correct scoring of individual movements, as well as the quality of the walk, trot, and canter. Mr. Clarke emphasized that the judge’s responsibility is “to give an honest and realistic score for each movement.” Then he watched as each Judge/LGrad practiced scoring the movements by holding up large laminated score cards of 0 – 9, including the possibility of a “.5”, that had been created specially for use at this Seminar by junior Grace Holt. Those who might have given a score on the low or high side of what Mr. Clarke thought should be given were asked to explain their reasoning, and discussion followed. With a chuckle, Mr Clarke also questioned the L Grad who once held up score cards for a movement score of “.58” (intending it to be 8.5).

On Sunday the scoring of the Collective Remarks was addressed. Watching more of Stephen’s videos that he had brought with him from Great Britain, the participants viewed tests, gave collective remarks and scores for each ride. Judges were encouraged to “let the words in the directives” assist in arriving at the final score. “Describe what you see without being rude.” Mr. Clarke would repeatedly return to the training scale to determine the final score. He emphasized that recognizing correct basics and harmony are the responsibility of the judge. As a final treat at the end of the Seminar on Sunday afternoon, the audience watched several Grand Prix rides, including Totillas, from international dressage competitions that Mr. Clarke himself had judged.

Seminar post evaluations reflected the attendees overwhelming satisfaction with this 2 day ADU dressage educational program with Stephen Clarke. With a possible range of 1-5, averages were

4.98 for the Speaker rating

4.95 for the Format rating

Additional comments included:

- * What good humor coupled with an amazing eye, wealth of experience & knowledge, absolute honesty to the sport, and humility. We learned so much!
- * The insight & comments regarding performance of horse & rider at various levels was quite illuminating. The use of example videos & “play by play” was excellent!
- * Outstanding. Seeing good & bad with running commentary really makes it clear & develops our eye for proper dressage.
- * It is easy to see why Stephen Clarke is the General of Dressage in The World!

And now for The Rest of the Story ...

#1) Without the DVDs and the Audio/Visual part of the presentation, we have no Seminar. On the morning of the second day, Sunday, Stephen decided he wanted to use the extra videos that he had brought with him from Great Britain. The problem was, they were in the wrong format, not compatible with our audio/visual systems here. To the rescue came one of ADU’s computer genius members, who immediately went to work right then and there to make them workable. She quietly sat on the floor, out of sight, reformatting them with her personal equipment. She was able to keep just ahead of when Stephen wanted to use the videos. No one knew there was even a problem. Thank goodness she quietly went about her business without telling those of us who would have melted into a panic!!!

#2) The ADU staff of course took Stephen out to dinner each evening Friday thru Sunday. On Friday evening Stephen told us he planned to order steak every night, since he had heard that Texas has some of the best beef in the world. Friday and Saturday evening he truly savored his steak dinners. On Sunday evening several ADU members arrived early to the restaurant we were to meet at. With horror we saw that there was no steak on the menu! Thinking quickly, one of the ADU members, Becky Pack, was sent out to the local grocery store. There she bought a fresh Ribeye steak at the meat counter, brought it back to the restaurant, where we talked the management & chef into cooking the steak especially for Stephen. When Stephen arrived, sat down, and ate his Sunday steak dinner, he proclaimed this steak a “10”! The sassy waitress also insisted Stephen try some southern “fried green tomatoes,” teasing him on how he pronounced the word “tomoto.” He loved this classic southern dish as well.

We also invite you to read a nice comprehensive review of the lecture content of the Stephen Clarke ADU Judging Seminar, posted on the website of Andrea Hart, Right Start Dressage:
<http://rightstartdressage.com/index.php/a-weekend-with-fei-judge-stephen-clarke/> part 1
<http://rightstartdressage.com/index.php/a-weekend-with-fei-judge-stephen-clarke/> part 2

We hope to see all of you in February 2015 at the next ADU Judging Seminar!