

## FEI Announces Decision in the Amy Tryon Case

**The FEI announced their decision Friday in the case of alleged abuse against Amy Tryon.**

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The FEI Tribunal has taken its decision in the case of alleged horse abuse committed by Mrs. Amy Tryon on her horse Le Samurai while participating in the cross-country phase of the 2007 Rolex Lexington Kentucky 4-Star Event on April 28, 2007.

The case involved the riding of an apparently lame horse in the final moments of the course, and the state of the horse when the last fence was jumped. A hearing was held in this matter on June 25, 2007, at which the parties presented a substantial volume of evidence including testimony from a number of very experienced members of the international eventing community.

The dilemma which the Tribunal had to resolve was a very difficult one. The main issues to be decided were (a) whether the competitor committed an "abuse" as this term is defined under the applicable rules (see note to the editor) and, if an abuse was committed, (b) whether it was an intentional act or an unfortunate omission to take action and stop the horse, as signals of discomfort were not correctly perceived by the competitor.

The Tribunal came to the conclusion that the competitor's behaviour at the end of the cross-country phase of the event objectively constitutes abuse according to the requirements of the applicable FEI regulation. The competitor acted, by continuing to ride after the horse was objectively lame and injured. Conversely the competitor omitted to act, by failing to pull up the horse when she could have. This caused or was likely to cause pain or discomfort to the horse.

The Tribunal expresses its opinion that "abuse of horses constitutes an offence that violates the most fundamental rules of the equestrian sport and is, as such, highly reprehensible from a moral point of view". The Tribunal determined that, had "the competitor intended to ride a lame or injured horse, a suspension for life would not have been an inappropriate or a too severe penalty".

The Tribunal's decision indicates, however, that it determined in this case that there was a "significant disconnect between what Amy Tryon felt and what was actually occurring." While Amy Tryon was negligent in not stopping the horse, the Tribunal determined that she did not understand that the horse had been injured until just as she pulled him up. The decision states that "[t]he Tribunal believes that in the state the competitor was in – tired, focused on completing the course and without the benefit of video and ability to observe matters or analyze them logically - she did not realize that the injury had occurred, and thus never intended to continue on course with a lame or injured horse. The Tribunal believes that the competitor clearly realized that the Horse took quite a number of uneven strides, but could not determine their cause or likely severity. The Tribunal believes that the competitor should have nevertheless stopped earlier to understand the severity of the lameness."

The determination that there was no premeditation and no actual awareness by the competitor that she was riding a lame or injured horse is taken into account in imposing sanctions on the competitor.

After careful examination of the parties' submissions and evidence, the Tribunal confirms the disqualification of horse and the competitor from the above-mentioned event and imposes the following sanctions on the competitor:

- suspension from competition for a period of two months (to commence immediately and without further notice at the end of the 30-day appeal deadline, or sooner if the right of appeal is waived);
- a fine of CHF 1,000;
- a cost contribution of CHF 1,500 towards the legal costs of the judicial procedure.

The Tribunal decision states that Mr. David O'Connor, President of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), Member of the FEI Eventing Committee and Chairman of the FEI Eventing Safety Committee, phrased the dilemma and the conclusion well in remarking: "Premeditated abuse is an action that should, and needs to be dealt with in the most severe actions that we as a sport can take by our judiciary side. Similar cases to this [the present case] are much harder to judge and I feel should be dealt with on a whole different level. Should this be taken seriously – yes; career changing – no."



The full text of the decision (30 pages) is available on the FEI website, [www.horsesport.org](http://www.horsesport.org), under LEGAL/DECISIONS.