



Press release

For immediate use

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Stadium impresses US expert

HE'S experienced the world's best equestrian sport venues – and reckons Manfeild Park Stadium is entirely worthy of comparison.

Jeremy Steinberg, the man charged with developing America's future equestrian talent as a coach of that country's budding Olympians, says the Feilding facility is a credit to the country and will be a key component to the continuing development of dressage here.

The most telling sign it's a winner? That every participant he spoke to during a just-concluded national Dressage Forum at which he was a guest was consistently effusive in their praise.

“When every single person tells you that a facility is fantastic and they are loving it, then I think that is the most telling sign that it is a good place.

“After all, it's always the riders who ultimately have to deal with it, so if they are really happy – and they are – then it's got to be fantastic.”

Rest assured, Mr Steinberg said, if there were issues, riders would have had no issue relating them.

“This place seems like it has benefitted from a great deal of input (from equestrian) and from what I heard, and can see, it's getting better.”

Such comment reinforces why Manfeild Park is of such importance to the region, facility chief executive Heather Verry says.

“Ensuring the Manawatu would have a premier facility for all equestrian undertakings was of paramount importance when the stadium was developed, and we were further delighted when Dressage New Zealand became a partner last year.

“The Dressage Forum is a major equestrian development event, nationally and internationally, in its own right,” Mrs Verry said.

“To now also hear such positive comment from an independent international expert simply reinforces that we are on the right path, and achieving the right results for the betterment of our community, our region and our country.”

That Manfeild Park was obviously unaffected by seasonal change was identified by Mr Steinberg as being a huge bonus for training and competition – and not just for riders but also horses.

A continuing challenge, at international level especially, was ensuring the animals were confident in their working surroundings.

“They require almost constant exposure to certain environments else there is a risk that, when they come into a place of this level, they become so worried they cannot actually perform,” Mr Steinberg explained.

“That’s why a venue like this is so important. I think, for a small country and a smaller dressage community, to have a venue of this standard, where you not only can run events of this nature but also everything else – equestrian shows, competitions - is wonderful.

“I understand that there aren’t a lot of indoor venues here, so to have something that can offer year-round use, large enough to support two arenas and seating is really important.”

Mr Steinberg was the top guest at the August 25-28 forum, organised by Dressage New Zealand in association with Massey University and the FEI, the international equestrian body.

This was Mr Steinberg's first visit to New Zealand and he was impressed by the standard of competition, noting that our country had a great reputation in the sport.

He was also delighted to share his knowledge with New Zealand riders, coaches and judges at a four-day forum.

He is presently a youth coach for the United States Equestrian Federation, so is often travelling from his Kirkland, Washington, home to assess young riders who may be competing for their nation within the next 10 years.

As a 1996 North American Junior/Young Rider gold medalist and a competitor at Grand Prix international levels, including the United States League Finals for the World Cup, he knows full well how tough it is at elite level. He is now driven to motivate future generations.

Young New Zealanders benefitted from this enthusiasm at a Youth Equestrian session, a first for New Zealand, on August 25. North Island secondary schools, pony clubs and youth riders to 21 years' age, and their associated coaches, were encouraged to attend. Having anticipated drawing perhaps 60-80 attendees, the organisers were delighted to see a bumper turnout of 260, which made for a wonderful sight, Mrs Verry said.

"The stadium has, of course, drawn in many big attendances over the last few years for a diversity of events. But given we have a special role for agricultural and equestrian occasions, it was a special thrill to see such an enthusiastic response from youngsters who are clearly passionate about their sport, and their future in it."

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