

Equestrian

Equestrian involves three disciplines – eventing, jumping and dressage.

“The equestrian disciplines are unique events at the Games, not only because they are the only Olympic events that involve animals (aside from the equestrian component of modern pentathlon), but they are where women and men compete together on equal terms.

In our sport, the horse is considered as much an athlete as the rider. Like any other sport, only exceptional horses (in combination with extraordinary riders) make it to the level required to be successful at the Olympics, and immeasurable amounts of time are spent in training an animal to that point.” – Sarah Dalziell, Equestrian Sports New Zealand High Performance Director

Qualifying – the road to Rio

Qualification for spots at Rio is dependent on results at FEI (Federation Equestre Internationale) selected Olympic qualification events. One of the qualification events was the Military Boekelo Horse Trials in The Netherlands in October 2015, where New Zealand qualified one Eventing Team from this event.

New Zealand is also well placed to qualify one individual dressage spot, based on FEI rider rankings for dressage, and this will be confirmed by the end of March 2016.

On the jumping front, New Zealand missed out by a slim margin on gaining an individual spot at the regional qualifier held in Hagen, Germany, in August 2015. However there is an outside possibility of a qualification spot from FEI rider rankings for jumping, or if Chinese Taipei elect not to fill the regional spot, which will be known by the end of March 2016.

The announcement of New Zealand rider selection for Rio is expected at the end of June 2016.

Rio 2016 Equestrian

When: Competition will take place from 5 to 21 August, including the equestrian opening and closing ceremonies.

Eventing (Team and Individual): 6-9 August

Jumping: 14 August (1st Qualifier), 16-17 August (Team), 19 August (Individual)

Dressage: 10-11 August Grand Prix (Individual & Team Qualifier), 12 August Grand Prix Special, (Team Final, Second Individual Qualifier), 15 August Grand Prix Freestyle (Individual Final)

Where: Olympic Equestrian Centre, Deodoro.

Eventing

Both team and individual competitions. Riders and horses (combinations) compete across the three disciplines – dressage, cross-country and jumping – to decide the medals. Riders compete on the same horse in all three disciplines with their scores counting for both the individual and team competitions.

In the team competition each team has four combinations, with the best three scores to count. The top 20 individuals then jump (in the final showjumping phase) again to decide the individual medals. Jump-offs may be held if necessary.

Jumping

Both team and individual competitions. The top 10 teams qualify for the second round where the medals will be decided. Individuals face up to three qualifying rounds, with the top 25 contesting the medals. Jump-offs may be held if necessary.

Dressage

The top six teams after the Grand Prix test battle it out for the medals in the Grand Prix Special. Again, the top three scores from each of the team-members across both tests count towards the final score. Individual medals are decided in the Grand Prix Freestyle, which is open to the top 18 combinations from the Grand Prix Special.

Demystifying the events

Eventing

Eventing (covering three disciplines of dressage, cross-country and jumping) – riders compete on the same horse in all three disciplines, with their scores counting for both the individual and team competitions. Combinations must complete each stage to move on to the next.

Dressage is the first discipline tested. Combinations then complete the cross-country phase, which is generally regarded as the toughest of the three. Horses are inspected the following day (at a 'trot-up'), to ensure they are healthy and fit to further compete, before they can start in the final phase – the jumping.

Judging of the dressage is done in exactly the same way as pure dressage. A dressage percentage is converted to penalty points for certain movements conducted in the walk, trot and canter.

Cross-country – the riders must complete the 6840 metre (approx.) course consisting of between 40-45 obstacles, including logs, water jumps, fences ascents and banks within an optimum time. Refusals incur 20 penalty points, and combinations can also pick up time faults, both of which are added to their dressage score.

Show-Jumping - In the last phase, show-jumping, combinations are again required to complete 9-12 obstacles inside the time allowed. Rails dropped, refusals or time faults incur penalties.

A combined score from the three phases determines the final scores. In the team event there are four members in each team, with only the best three scores counting towards the final score for the team medals. The top 20 individual scores after the first showjumping round compete in a second and final round to determine individual medals, with only three riders from any one team entitled to make it through to that round.

Jumping

Individual

Riders must memorise the course, which will generally sweep around the arena and include double jumps, treble jumps and other challenging obstacles. The maximum height allowed is 1.6 meters, width is a maximum of 2 meters for oxers and 2.2 meters for triple bars. Refusals and rails dropped incur penalties, as does finishing outside the time allowed.

After three elimination rounds, the top 20 riders compete for medals in two final rounds, called the A and B finals. The rider with the best combined performance in these two rounds wins the competition.

Team

Teams are limited to four riders and each team discards its worst result. The best eight teams from the first round go through to the final. The final standings are based on accumulated scores from both rounds.

In the event of a tie, a jump-off decides the winner – competitors are also going against the clock, with the fastest and cleanest round winning.

Dressage

Dressage should be flowing and free, as well as aesthetically beautiful. It should demonstrate the strength of the horse, as well as the purity of its movement and its obedience and expression.

Riders are marked between 0 and 10 (10 being excellent) on each movement by a panel of judges. On entering the arena, riders will salute the judges before starting their test, and will salute them again at the end.

The Grand Prix

The rider must lead the horse through pre-determined movements. Six teams qualify for the following round, while 32 riders progress in the individual competition – the 24 qualifying team members and the eight best-placed individuals.

The Grand Prix Special

The rider must again lead the horse through pre-determined movements. This phase determines the winners of the team event (by adding together their points from the first two competitions) and the 18 finalists for the individual event.

The Grand Prix Freestyle

Combinations perform their own composition to music of their choice. The Grand Prix Freestyle determines the medalists in the individual event.

What's new at Rio?

The only significant change for the Rio Olympics is in eventing, where each team will have four combinations, with the best three to count. London 2012 saw teams of five, with top three scores counted.

Olympic Medals

3 gold, 2 silver, 5 bronze

GOLD

1984 Los Angeles	Individual	Mark Todd
1988 Seoul	Individual	Mark Todd
1996 Atlanta	Individual	Blyth Tait

SILVER

1992 Barcelona	Team	Andrew Nicholson, Blyth Tait, Vicky Latta
1996 Atlanta	Individual	Sally Clark

BRONZE

1988 Seoul	Team	Tinks Pottinger, Mark Todd, Andrew Bennie, Margs Carline
1992 Barcelona	Individual	Blyth Tait
1996 Atlanta	Team	Vaughn Jefferis, Andrew Nicholson, Blyth Tait, Vicky Latta
2000 Sydney	Individual	Mark Todd
2012 London	Team	Jonelle Richards, Caroline Powell, Mark Todd, Andrew Nicholson, Jock Paget

The Stars of Equestrian

Eventing

The New Zealand eventers are well regarded and recognised as some of the most accomplished and successful in the world, particularly Sir Mark Todd and Andrew Nicholson, both of whom have been based in the UK for many years. Andrew Nicholson is continuing to recover from a fall in late 2015 and is

hoping to be competing again by the 2016 Badminton Horse Trials. Over the last 12 months Sir Mark and rising stars Jonelle and Tim Price have all featured in the top 10 in the FEI world rider rankings. Leap-frogging her has been another rising star, Tim Price (Jonelle's husband), who has shot to third in the FEI world rankings for eventing (both rankings as at 1 November 2015).

Brit William Fox-Pitt and German Michael Jung are two of the best. Jung is the only rider to hold the World, Olympic and European titles at the same time. He won the individual gold at the London Olympics, and was a member of the winning team.

Fox-Pitt's career highlights include an Olympic team silver medal at both the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens and the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, and a team gold and individual silver at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games at Kentucky in 2010. He unfortunately was in a riding accident in October 2015 and remains in a recovery phase, so his attendance at Rio is yet to be confirmed.

Jumping

2012 Olympic champ Steve Guerdat (SUI) is always a pleasure to watch, as is Scott Brash (GBR), along with Daniel Deusser (GER). The Americans also have a number of top jumpers too, including Mclain Ward, Kent Farrington and Bezzie Madden. The British fittingly took out the team gold at London.

Dressage

The Germans and Dutch dominate the world of dressage, although none of their individual riders can touch Charlotte Dujardin (GBR) and her gorgeous horse Valegro. The two are double world champions in dressage, hold the world record of 94.3%, and remain unbeaten since January 2012. Dujardin, the 2012 individual Olympic gold medal winner, is currently working with New Zealand dressage riders.

Edward Gal (NED) long held the captivation of many with his tremendous partnership with Tortilas, but now has two new horses coming up the ranks. Isabell Werth (GER) is another superstar, as is Carl Hester (GBR).

Did you know?

- Sir Mark Todd and Andrew Nicholson are New Zealand's most capped Olympians, with seven caps apiece.
- All of New Zealand's Olympic equestrian medals have been won by eventers:
 - Three individual gold medals – Sir Mark Todd on Charisma at Los Angeles (1984) and Seoul (1988) and Blyth Tait on Ready Teddy at Atlanta (1996)
 - One individual silver medal – Sally Clark on Squirrel Hill at Atlanta (1996)
 - Two individual bronze medals – Blyth Tait on Messiah at Barcelona (1992) and Sir Mark Todd on Eye Spy at Sydney (2000)
 - One team silver medal – Barcelona (1992)
 - Three team bronze medals – Seoul (1988), Atlanta (1996) and London (2012).
- Sir Mark Todd has ridden at two Olympics in two disciplines – Seoul (1988) and Barcelona (1992) – in both eventing and showjumping. He has as many medals as any other New Zealand athlete to date, with five to his name, including two golds and the strong prospect of adding to that medal tally at Rio.

Olympic Sport Information



- New Zealand has been represented at 10 Olympics in showjumping, eight Olympics in eventing, and three Olympics in dressage. One of the challenges the sport faces is that there are no direct flights for horses from New Zealand to Brazil, so those not already based in the UK, Europe or the USA will need to travel a significant distance, over multiple legs, to have access to flights to Rio. To return to New Zealand after the Olympics, the horses will then need to go back to the country they came from and complete a 6 month stay there, in addition to a quarantine period, before they are able to return home.
- Riders in the jumping competition at Rio need to be at least 18 years old, with horses at least 9 years old, while dressage competitors need to be 16 years old, with horses 8 years old and over.

Equestrian terminology

Eventing

Combination	A rider and horse.
Run out	When a horse ducks out from the fence at the last minute.
Stop, refusal or balk	When a horse stops at a fence.
Frangible pins	A breakable pin installed in some cross-country jumps which releases the top part of the fence when hit to safeguard against major injury to horse and rider.
Corner fence	Triangular-shaped jumps with the horse generally jumping one corner of it.
Optimum time	The time allowed in which to complete the cross-country course, with those over the time receiving penalties.
Oxer	A jump with front and back elements.
Palisade	A fence which leans towards the direction the horse is jumping in.
Roll Top	A jump that has a rounded half-barrel look on the top.
Skinny	A narrow fence.

Jumping

Combination	Two or more jumps in succession that are in related lines.
Oxer	A jump with front and back elements.
Treble	Three elements in a row.
Liverpool	A jump with water underneath.

Dressage

Change of leg	This is usually performed at a canter when a horse changes their lead leg from one to the other.
Flying change	As above.
Passage	An elevated trot.
Piaffe	A highly-collected condensed trot done on the spot.

Olympic Sport Information



Counter canter

Cantering on the lead opposing the direction of the horse.

Shoulder In

The horse should be slightly bent around the rider's inside leg.

General

Fault

Penalty points gathered by knocking a rail off the cups or exceeding the time allowed on a course.

**Walk, trot, canter
and gallop**

The pace of the horse from slowest to fastest.

Timeline

- 680 BC** Horse sport was introduced to the Ancient Olympic Games.
- 1909** First jumping Nations Cup was held in London and San Sebastian in Spain.
- 1912** Jumping, dressage and eventing became part of the format of the new Olympic Games.
- 1953** First world jumping championships were held in Paris.
- 1966** First world dressage and eventing championships were held in Burghley.
- 1990** First World Equestrian Games were held in Stockholm, where the New Zealand eventing team, comprising Andrew Nicholson, Sir Mark Todd, Andrew Scott and Blyth Tait, won the team gold.
- 1960** Rome Olympics – showjumpers Adrian White and Telebrae were the first kiwi combination to compete at jumping at the Olympic Games.
- 1984** Los Angeles Olympics – Sir Mark Todd and the mighty Charisma won the individual gold medal. Todd, with Andrew Nicholson, Andrew Bennie and Mary Hamilton, finished sixth in the team event.
- 1988** Seoul Olympics – Todd and Charisma again took gold, and the team – Bennie, Marges Knighton (nee Carline) Todd and Tinks Pottinger – won bronze.
- 1992** Barcelona Olympics – Vicki Latta, Andrew Nicholson and Blyth Tait won the team silver, with Tait also taking the individual bronze aboard Messiah.
- 1996** Atlanta Olympics – the golden years of the eventers continued, with Tait and Ready Teddy taking the individual gold, and Sally Clark and Squirrel Hill the silver. Tait, Nicholson, Latta and Vaughn Jefferis took the team bronze.
- 2000** Sydney Olympics – New Zealand's first Olympic dressage combination competed, with Kallista Field placed 18th. Mark Todd and Eye Spy won the individual bronze in the eventing competition.
- 2012** London Olympics – the eventing team were back on the podium with a team bronze medal, after finishing 5th at both the Athens and Beijing Games.