

FOCUS reporter John Charlton: Would you be able to send me a current statement by the State Fair Board about the decision to switch to the Equine Sports Council as the World Championship Horse Show sanctioning body?

Officials of the Kentucky State Fair & World's Championship Horse Show: The Kentucky State Fair Board released their official message on the matter, viewable [here](#).

JC: Why was that decision made?

Officials of the Kentucky State Fair & World's Championship Horse Show: Kentucky State Fair Board unanimously approved the change, recognizing the importance of operating with Saddlebred-competition-tailored rules and standards emphasizing integrity, sportsmanship, and safety for the non-Olympic horse industry. Qualifying requirements for WCHS remained unchanged.

JC: Also, could you all address the decision by some of the top competitors to boycott this year's competition?

Officials of the Kentucky State Fair & World's Championship Horse Show: All the top competitors and barns are here and participating. Last year's attendance for the 120th was a banner year and this year's participation is comparable to 2023. There's no question the best Saddlebreds, native to Kentucky, are here showing at Freedom Hall.

JC: Is there concern that this diminishes the prestige of the event and is there concern moving forward of the future of the championships?

Officials of the Kentucky State Fair & World's Championship Horse Show: The World's Championship Horse Show is the most prestigious Saddlebred show in the world showcasing Kentucky's only native horse – the American Saddlebred. We have no concerns and this year's high level of participation and quality reflects our show's good health.

JC: Without being able to get into too many details, is it fair to say that the State Fair Board decided to switch to ESC from USEF due in part to USEF's handling of a violation last year, as well as lack of cooperation over compliance issues?

Officials of the Kentucky State Fair & World's Championship Horse Show: Among many things, the prior governing group violated our mutual agreement dating back to 1995 by supporting shows considered in competition with our event, and a lack of on-site enforcement made our decision to part ways evident. Thoughtful consideration was given when deciding to change governing bodies. The announcement to partner with Equine Sports Council was announced in February. Our agency operates and hosts over 300 events a year, including some of the largest and most prestigious livestock, equine, and agricultural events in the country. Our shows comply with federal, state, and local laws, and we're always looking for ways to enhance the event for all involved.