

## MALAWI VAULTING TEAMS' SUCCESS AT INTER AFRICA CUP

Vaulting is gymnastics and dance on a moving horse, usually performed to music. The Malawi Vaulting teams, A being Kiliniti Ngwengwe (15), Brenda Saidi (10), Tawina Nickson (10) and Kate McGowan (7) and B Aubright Wyson (10), Yirogos Hatzis (10), Gift Gaesi (11) and Craig Christie (6), have recently returned from South Africa after competing against Swaziland, Mauritius, Zambia and many teams from Gauteng in South Africa. Apart from Kate McGowan (who entered the competition with Pegasus Vaulting club last year) this is the first competition these children have ever been in. Most of them have rarely left the farm, so the trip was a huge adventure. Their performance was outstanding for children so young and they were true ambassadors to their country in every sense of the word.

Our thanks must go to our many sponsors who enabled us to fulfil this dream to "Vault for Malawi" and to take two teams of mainly farm children to the Inter Africa Cup. **The Sports Council of Malawi** donated funds to enable us to get passports for them and helped us with the processing thereof.

**Air Malawi** sponsored the 5 farm children and gave us a reduced rate for the group. Their friendliness and thoughtfulness of the children's needs was much appreciated throughout both our flights, and the children were wished luck over the intercom by the pilot & crew and allowed into the cockpit on landing in Johannesburg, and congratulated whole heartedly on the way back.



**First Flight**



**Hold tight**

**Illovo** tracksuits were worn a great deal of the time and **Multichoice** shirts were much admired and provided a variety of colour and also enabled us to identify our children amongst the 100+ other competitors.



The children were delighted with their named bags from **Skyband** which of course were essential to the trip. **FES** covered the cost of the very stunning leotards worn for the show.



Personal donations went towards treats for the children such as a trip to the Bird Park and a picnic at friends and assisted in the cost of food and transport throughout our trip there. **Celtel** donated towards the cost of accommodation for the week we were there, which was very important in keeping the teams together in a little safe haven and a good nights rest for all. We were also very lucky in that a very nice lady whose daughter is a vaulter at Riba, lent us her brand new car to assist in transporting the kids around. Out thanks also to **CFAO** and **Gift for the Givers** and the many private donors for their support and encouragement.

Training commenced on our first day of arrival and was somewhat baffling for the children, with so many other kids to watch it was difficult to concentrate. We were lent a horse called Boet who we used last year, for the first lesson and although somewhat wobbly they all coped with the different stride from our horses. The second lesson was on a much bigger horse and again the children just took it in their stride without a worry at all.



Aubright in shoulderstand Gift roll movement on Boet

Kate on Fantasy

The camaraderie between the teams from all countries was wonderful, we met up with old friends and new and the atmosphere throughout was of fun and friendship. Time allocation was tight so the children only had 2 practices on the horses before the show. Leotards arrived in time and fitted. I had tried to design them with the Malawi flag in mind and they turned out beautifully, with the girl's skirts floating as they moved.



Brenda in crab



Tawina, from arabesque to shoulderstand

Time out was full of fun and laughs, swimming and playing together. They mastered the many changes in their lives, the busy traffic of Gauteng, sitting and eating at table, they loved the bath with hot water and enjoyed the comfortable bed. We were amazed at how well they coped and their behaviour was a credit to their parents.



Breakfast



In the Bird Park with Easter Bunny



Memory game



Gift on the bucking bronco



Craig in a fit of giggles



Picnic time with new friends, Matt & Ross



Ready for the opening Ceremony Parade

The show was held at the Kyalami Equestrian Park on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March, where there was also International Show jumping, Dressage and Showing going on at the same time. The Vaulting Show was in the Lippizaner Hall where last year there were 8 teams competing from 4 countries. This year from 5 countries there were 18 teams in the E grade competition and 5 teams in the D Grade . The event has mushroomed and is fast becoming a very popular sport in the world of horses. All other teams had had international coaches this year to train specially for this event except Malawi. The children's performance was outstanding and our teams came 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> (one child had only vaulted 8 times prior to the show). The average age of the 8 children is 10!



Malawi A Team

All teams who entered from Malawi



The Michuru Team from Blantyre, who entered privately, was made up of Acacia Paul (13) (who entered last year with Pegasus), Peter Harrison (14), Thomas Bunn (13) and young Leoni Paul (9) also did extremely well, coming joint 6<sup>th</sup> with Mauritius

FEI and the Malawian Equestrian Federation now recognise that Vaulting has a valuable place in Equestrian Sport particularly for developing federations, where horses are limited and one horse can be used for 8-10 children at a time. A significant advantage is the team spirit, discipline, balance, athleticism, rhythm and the care and welfare of the horses involved in this sport.



Pegasus Vaulters with Dekador and Ginger

We are very proud of our teams and they have won the hearts and minds of many throughout the competition.



Hand stand competitions



with the Mauritian and Sowetan Teams



Boys with Bongani (SA National Team)



Girls with the lovely Mauritian Team

If you would like to learn more about Vaulting or if you would like to contribute to the development of this sport in our country, then please contact Karen McGowan on 09 918726 or e-mail [mcgoos@afrika-online.net](mailto:mcgoos@afrika-online.net). We have future events coming up and so need to keep raising funds to enable us to enter other competitions. Or if you have ideas for a fundraiser then we would love to hear from you.

We hope to put on a performance at the May Fair on May 31<sup>st</sup> at St Andrews Primary School, so see you there!