

PHAETON

An Initiative by Hippoevent - For The Welfare of Horses and Ponies in Driving Sports



The Fall of Phaeton – Peter Paul Rubens 1604/1605 - Oil on canvas - National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, USA

PHAETON is a well-known figure from Greek mythology.

PHAETON is the son of the sun god Helios.

In Greek mythology, Helios, the sun god, pulls the sun across the sky in his chariot – the symbol of the sun's daily course from east to west. Harnessed to this chariot are four magnificent stallions – the fire horses.

PHAETON asked his father if he could drive the magnificent chariot of the sun for a day. Helios, concerned for his son's safety, warns Phaeton of the danger. Nevertheless, Phaeton is determined to prove his strength.

PHAETON As the night drew to a close, he climbed into his father's precious and richly decorated sun chariot. The horses, brimming with power and dynamism, raced off, and the team soon lost control. The journey ended disastrously.

PHAETON loses control of the horses, and the team veers off course, and the sun is hurled too close to the Earth. Large parts of the world are set ablaze. This leads to great panic among both humans and the gods. Nature has been endangered by Phaeton's incompetence and overconfidence.

The gods, especially Zeus, are shocked by the chaos Phaeton has caused. To save the Earth, Zeus boldly intervenes and hurls a lightning bolt at Phaeton, who subsequently falls from his chariot and plunges into a river.

This act by the responsible father of the gods, Zeus, restores order to the cosmos and ends Phaeton's passionate but disastrous adventure.

Phaeton's ride was probably the first rampage in world history.

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PHAETON in modern driving sport

The legend of Phaeton represents excessive ambition, overconfidence, false ambition, but also the obligation to take responsibility and intervene when necessary when one experiences, recognizes and sees where the ride is going.

PHAETON For us, it symbolizes a ride with an outcome that we do not want to experience.

Current driving sport has come close to its limits - or, considering current events, has already exceeded them.

Respect and responsibility are our principles towards our sporting partners, the horses and ponies. This must be handled with the utmost sensitivity. The horses and ponies are at our mercy – we are obligated to treat them correctly.

The image that driving sport presents to the outside world is crucial for its positive development, now and in the future.

A positive future for driving sports is in all of our hands. Fair and ethical equestrian sport, transparency, and the utmost respect for horses as living creatures – these must always be absolute priorities in driving sports.

The PHAETON initiative - **for the welfare of horses and ponies in driving sports** - stands for horse-friendly driving sports at all performance levels, active animal welfare, and our love for the wonderful horses and ponies that enrich our lives.

Who is responsible for a successful future of driving sport?

All of us... the active athletes, the trainers and instructors, the international and national officials (judges, course designers, stewards, technical delegates, veterinarians...), the equestrian organizations and clubs, the owners and breeders of carriage horses, the manufacturers of carriage driving equipment, the organizers and sponsors, and the members of the press.

Only if we all pull together and the sport presents itself positively – in a horse-friendly, clean, and fair manner – will it continue to exist in the future and not revert to the chariot races of ancient Rome as an action-packed entertainment program.

Fair and ethical equestrian sport with transparency, responsibility, and respect for horses and ponies – that must be our way in carriage driving.

What is the current situation in driving sport?

In modern driving, a lot of thought is given to how to negotiate the turns in a marathon faster, tighter, and more spectacularly, how technically sophisticated the equipment should be to negotiate the obstacles in a cone course flawlessly and in the ever-shorter time limit, and how to present the team with little tricks to achieve better dressage scores.

Harnesses are touted as "unbreakable," and carriage technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated to enable even higher speeds.

Aids, especially newly designed bits, promise quick success – but can cause long-term physical and psychological harm to horses and ponies. The secret of the new, horrifying bit, which visually resembles medieval torture instruments, is often a dead end.

The weakest link in the chain is always the horse or pony; it is our responsibility to protect them from the dominance of technology and the wrong motivations.

When time and money are at stake, education and training are often neglected.

There's no need to reinvent classic horse training theories.

They have been proven and developed over centuries. Ignoring this wealth of knowledge and experience and trying to achieve dubious goals more quickly with tricks and technical gimmicks is irresponsible to horses and ponies.

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Look instead of looking away – and don't close your eyes!

International and national officials guide driving through their assessments and decisions.

They bear a great deal of responsibility, especially towards the horses, ponies, and active drivers, as well as the urgently needed young talent in driving.

Objectivity and rule-compliant conduct are of utmost importance. The well-being of our four-legged sporting partners lies largely in the hands of those responsible for the rules and whose actions determine victories and placings.

It must be guaranteed that those in charge have a solid and honest education and possess the necessary experience and character traits for their important positions.

The willingness to work unbiasedly for the positive and correct conduct of driving, and not to allow personal sensitivities or potential advantages to influence decisions, must be guaranteed.

The desire to be invited to the next competition as an official must not influence actions and decisions

Looking too far away can cause major problems for the entire driving sport. Turning a blind eye to a champion breaking the rules is damaging to the fundamental values of the sport of driving.

Driving sport in photos and videos – on social media platforms and in the press

It's not the evil smartphones and cameras that take bad pictures – it's the ones to be despised that make it possible to capture unsightly – even disgusting – images of driving.

We live in a time of rapid transparency, a fact that everyone must be aware of.

Limiting ourselves to discussing and taking measures to address how and why unsightly images of equestrian sports reach the public is the wrong approach.

If driving doesn't present itself in a poor form – no matter where, when, or by whom – then there is no opportunity for unsightly images that can massively damage – even destroy – the sport.

We should learn from history - and not follow in Phaeton's hoofsteps.

For current reasons, we at Hippoevent would like to revive an initiative we first launched in 2006. We see this as urgently necessary.

We believe that it is currently very important in driving sports to draw attention to fundamental issues, and especially to stand up for our horses and ponies!

We live in challenging times – only together will we move forward into a successful future.

We love horses and ponies – we are fascinated by driving.
Only if many people pull together will the sport remain equine-friendly and sustainable.

We stand for fair and ethical equestrian sports – join us as we advocate for correct and clean driving – always with a focus on the welfare of horses and ponies.

We want driving to be done with responsibility and respect for our sport partners.

Join us in our initiative for the welfare of horses and ponies in driving sports.
The future of driving sports is the responsibility of all of us. Fair and ethical equestrian sport, transparency, and the utmost respect for horses as living creatures – these must always be absolute priorities in driving sports.

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PHAETON - Initiative for the welfare of horses and ponies in driving sports

stands for a sincere partnership with our horses and ponies – for horse-friendly driving sports at all performance levels.

The supporters of the PHAETON - Initiative for the welfare of horses and ponies in driving sports - are committed to the following principles:

- ❖ **The welfare of horses and ponies in driving must be the focus of all activities – in daily interactions at home in the stable, in education and training, and in competitions.
The welfare of horses and ponies must always be the primary focus in its organization, design, and planning.**
- ❖ **The education and training of driving horses and ponies must aim to develop sports partners who, thanks to systematic and correct training, are healthy and content horses and ponies for many years. Driving should be enjoyable for everyone, especially the horses and ponies – without coercion or violence.**
- ❖ **Fairness and respect towards horses and ponies must always be maintained. Our aim is to acquire the knowledge to respectfully assess the psychological and physical suitability of a horse and pony in order to sensitively guide them to their individual peak performance.**
- ❖ **The love for horses and ponies, the focus on their well-being, and the aesthetics of equestrian sport should be the focus, not economic interests and fraudulent show success through short-lived sensationalism, tricks, and horse-harmful aids.**
- ❖ **The protection of the driving horse and pony must take priority over the dominance of equipment and technology.**
- ❖ **The horses and ponies are partners and should not be selfishly overtaxed for personal success. A healthy, content horse and pony stands before placings, trophies, and a higher selling price.**
- ❖ **We all represent the driving sport – and it is our concern – to present our beautiful sport to the world in the best possible light. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to work towards guiding the driving sport into a positive future.**

We must stand up when actions occur that harm our horses and ponies.

Join our initiative!

PHAETON - for the welfare of horses and ponies in driving sports

Tell others: friends, drivers, colleagues, family, acquaintances, team members

Join us – free of charge – share and comment on our content on social media, and help spread and embed our principles in the driving world