



HIPPOEVENT PODCAST INTERVIEW Sebastian Warneck Candidate for FEI Driving Athlete Representative 2026–2030

Welcome to a new episode of the Hippoevent Podcast.

Today, I am delighted to welcome **Sebastian Warneck**.

For many years, Sebastian has been one of the world's most successful international pair driving athletes. He is a nine-time German Champion, a multiple FEI World Championship Individual Silver Medallist, and a Team World Champion with Germany. Away from the carriage, he carries great responsibility in his professional career as a public prosecutor in Berlin.

Today, however, we are not talking about Sebastian's sporting achievements. Instead, our focus is on the **future of international driving sport**.

Sebastian is standing as a candidate for the position of **FEI Driving Athlete Representative 2026–2030**. His goal is to represent the interests of all international driving athletes within the FEI—from single, pair and four-in-hand drivers to pony drivers.

As a father, he is also deeply committed to youth driving. Diversity and inclusion are equally important to him, and he is passionate about supporting the continued development of Para Driving. Above all, he wants to ensure that the voices of active athletes are heard whenever important decisions and rule changes are made within the FEI.

In today's episode, we will discuss:

- Why this election is so important for the future of international driving sport.
- The issues Sebastian is most passionate about.
- His vision and priorities as FEI Driving Athlete Representative.
- And why every eligible athlete's vote matters.

Because this election is about shaping the future of our sport—together.

Before we begin our interview, here is some important information about the election.

The online election for the **FEI Driving Athlete Representative 2026–2030** takes place from **3 August until 5 October 2026**.

During this period, all eligible international driving athletes can cast their vote online. Every vote contributes to shaping the future of our sport and ensuring that athletes' interests are represented within the FEI.

For Germany, this election represents a special opportunity. Since 2017, there has been no German representative on the FEI Driving Committee. The last German member was **Dr. Klaus Christ**, who served from 2013 to 2017.

Further information on the election—including who is eligible to vote, how the voting process works and where to cast your vote—is available at www.hippoevent.at.

Now, let's begin.

Sebastian, welcome to the Hippoevent Podcast!

Sebastian Warneck

Hello Jacqueline!

Hello everyone, and thank you very much for inviting me.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Sebastian, what inspired you to stand as a candidate for the position of FEI Driving Athlete Representative?

Sebastian Warneck

Driving has been part of my life for almost thirty years and has shaped me in so many ways.

Throughout those years I have experienced unforgettable moments, met incredible people and gained valuable experience.

At some point, you reach a stage where you no longer want to simply benefit from the sport yourself—you also want to give something back.

That is exactly why I decided to stand for election.

I want to help ensure that every driving athlete has a strong voice within the FEI and that their concerns are genuinely heard.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

You have spent many years at the highest level of international driving sport and achieved remarkable success at Championships.

Alongside your career in driving, your demanding profession as a public prosecutor and your role as a family man, you are now taking on another important responsibility by standing for election as FEI Driving Athlete Representative.

What personally motivates you to take this step?

Sebastian Warneck

My motivation comes from the fact that today I know our sport from many different perspectives.

I am not only an active athlete, but also a trainer and, for the past two years, an international driving judge.

These different roles have allowed me to understand the challenges of our sport from several viewpoints.

In addition, my professional career as a public prosecutor has taught me the importance of fairness, responsibility and balancing different interests before making decisions.

I would now like to use all of these experiences to help move our sport forward.

I am certainly not standing because I believe I have all the answers.

On the contrary—I believe in listening.

Over the past thirty years I have learned that the best solutions are found through open dialogue and cooperation.

That is exactly what I want to stand for.

Key Priorities

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Sebastian, what are the key issues you would like to focus on over the next four years if you are elected as FEI Driving Athlete Representative?

Sebastian Warneck

If I had to identify my main priorities, there are five topics that stand above all the others.

The first—and most important—**is horse welfare.**

The welfare of our horses must always come first. Horse welfare cannot exist only on paper; it must be reflected in practical, realistic and workable decisions. Our rules should genuinely improve the welfare of our horses while also taking into account the realities of our sport.

My second priority is listening.

An Athlete Representative must, above all, be able to listen.

I want to be approachable and available to every international driving athlete and to represent their interests within the FEI.

And when I say "everyone", I truly mean everyone: World Champions as well as newcomers to international driving, single, pair and four-in-hand drivers, horse and pony drivers, our youth athletes, Under 25 competitors and our Para Driving athletes.

Every athlete deserves to be heard.

Another major priority for me is clear, fair and driving-specific rules.

I say this very deliberately:

Driving is not riding.

Through many conversations with active athletes, I have realised that the increasing harmonisation of FEI disciplines is viewed critically by many within our community.

Of course, common standards can be beneficial—but they must also reflect the unique nature of driving.

One example is the FEI pony measuring regulations. What may be practical in another discipline can create a significant organisational and financial burden in driving—especially for four-in-hand competitors.

Another example is the compulsory use of helmets in all competition phases and throughout the showground from 2027 onwards.

Safety must always remain a top priority.

At the same time, however, we should also discuss how we can preserve the identity and traditions of our sport.

In the dressage arena, elegance, style and the harmonious presentation of driver, horses and carriage are among the defining characteristics of driving.

I believe we should strive for solutions that ensure safety while also respecting the unique traditions and character of our discipline.

My fifth priority is the future of driving sport.

I want to help shape a sport that is modern, safe and future-oriented—without losing its identity.

Driving is unique because of its incredible diversity. From Shetland Ponies to draft horses, from Haflingers and Lipizzaners to Friesians and Kladrubers, very few FEI disciplines showcase such a wide variety of horse and pony breeds.

This diversity is one of our greatest strengths and should be protected while remaining open to sensible progress.

Change is important—but it should always be developed together with the athletes and reflect the practical realities of our sport.

If I had to summarise my vision in one sentence, it would be this:

My goal is a modern, safe and future-oriented driving sport that puts the horse first, values its athletes and proudly preserves its unique identity.

Challenges, Communication and Representation

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

International driving sport is currently facing many challenges—from rule changes and increasing demands on organisers to horse welfare.

Where do you see the greatest need for action?

Sebastian Warneck

I believe the biggest challenge is ensuring that everyone affected is involved in the decision-making process at an early stage.

Naturally, this leads to discussions—and I believe that is a good thing.

Because it is not only the final decision that matters, but also the process that leads to it.

When athletes, organisers, officials and National Federations work together from the very beginning, we are far more likely to find practical and sustainable solutions.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

How would you ensure that the voices of athletes from every nation are heard—regardless of whether they compete with horses or ponies, in single, pair or four-in-hand driving?

Sebastian Warneck

That is one of my highest priorities.

I want to be approachable and accessible to every driving athlete, regardless of nationality, level of competition or driving category.

Everyone should feel comfortable contacting me—whether in person, by email, by telephone or through social media.

An Athlete Representative must be available and willing to listen.

No athlete should ever feel that their opinion matters less than someone else's.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

You have experienced international driving sport from many different perspectives—as an athlete, trainer, judge and official.

How does that help you represent the interests of athletes?

Sebastian Warneck

It allows me to understand how decisions affect people in practice.

I know what it means to compete at small national events as well as at World Championships.

As an athlete, trainer and judge, I have learned to see our sport from different perspectives.

That experience helps me understand different opinions and find balanced, practical solutions that benefit the entire driving community.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Communication between the FEI, the National Federations and the athletes is often criticised.

Many people feel that decisions are made without athletes being sufficiently involved.

How would you improve that communication?

Sebastian Warneck

Communication has to work in both directions.

It is not enough simply to announce decisions.

It is equally important to listen to athletes and explain, at an early stage, why changes are necessary.

Transparency creates trust.

When people understand why decisions are made and are involved from the beginning, they are much more likely to support them.

Open communication is the foundation of good governance.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Three candidates are standing in this election.

If you are elected, how would you like athletes to look back on your four-year term?

Sebastian Warneck

I am realistic enough to know that I cannot change everything.

My greatest hope is that, after four years, athletes will be able to say:

"Sebastian listened to us. He was approachable. He represented our interests and gave athletes a stronger voice within the FEI."

If, together, we have also managed to improve some aspects of international driving sport, I would consider that a great success.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Why should eligible international driving athletes vote for you?

Sebastian Warneck

Because I know our sport from many different perspectives.

My approach is simple:

Listen. Act fairly. Communicate openly.

I want to represent every athlete, regardless of nationality, discipline or level of competition.

My commitment is to serve the entire international driving community with dedication, integrity and responsibility.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Finally, what message would you like to leave with international driving athletes before they cast their vote?

Sebastian Warneck

Our sport exists because of the people who dedicate their time, passion and commitment to it.

Together, we have the opportunity to shape the future of driving sport while preserving everything that makes it so unique.

I would be honoured to earn your trust and to serve as your FEI Driving Athlete Representative over the next four years.

Thank you very much for your support.

Hippoevent Wordrap

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

To finish today's episode, it's time for our **Hippoevent Wordrap**—short questions, spontaneous answers and a chance for our listeners to get to know you a little better.

Are you ready?

Sebastian Warneck

Absolutely!

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

What does driving sport mean to you personally?

Sebastian Warneck

Passion and challenge.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

What should never be missing at a driving event?

Sebastian Warneck

For me, horse welfare always comes first. It is the foundation of everything we do and should never be compromised.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Who has had the greatest influence on your sporting career?

Sebastian Warneck

Michael Freund, Fred Freund, as well as Ewald and Eckart Meyer.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

What is the single most important quality of a great FEI Athlete Representative?

Sebastian Warneck

The ability to listen—combined with fairness, responsibility and, sometimes, strong nerves.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Which three words describe you best?

Sebastian Warneck

Hard-working. Ambitious. And perhaps a little too talkative sometimes.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

What is your wish for international driving sport in 2030?

Sebastian Warneck

I hope to see a sport that is stronger than ever, continues to grow around the world, and where the welfare of our horses is even better than it is today.

Closing Remarks

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Sebastian, thank you very much for taking the time to join us today.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts, your motivation and your vision as a candidate for the position of **FEI Driving Athlete Representative 2026–2030**.

This election is an important opportunity for the future of international driving sport.

Over the coming weeks, Hippoevent will continue to provide comprehensive information about the election, including the voting process, eligibility criteria and everything athletes need to know before casting their vote.

Because every vote matters.

Sebastian, thank you once again, and we wish you every success in the election.

Sebastian Warneck

Thank you very much, Jacqueline.

And thank you to everyone who has listened to our conversation today.

I would be truly honoured to earn your trust and to represent the international driving community over the next four years.

Thank you for your support.

Jacqueline Zimmermann | Hippoevent

Thank you for listening to another episode of **the Hippoevent Podcast**.