Wassenberg. Der Olympiastart in seinem Heimatland Brasilien sollte im letzten Jahr der letzte große sportliche Traum für den Milliardär Dr. Jorge Ferreira da Rocha werden. Dafür suchte er ein Dressur-Pferd mit entsprechenden und geforderten Möglichkeiten und wurde fündig in Italien, doch das Pferd konnte nicht gestartet werden. Eine juristische Auseinandersetzung brachte nichts, nun ging er mit einem Offenen Brief an die Öffentlichkeit.

Dr. Jorge Ferreira da Rocha aus Sao Paulo (71) ist einer der reichsten Geschäftsmänner Südamerikas, er ist u.a. Eigentümer der größten Versicherung des südlichen Erdteils von Amerika, von „Amil“. Und er ist Dressurreiter aus Leidenschaft. Jahrelang ritt die Französin Marietta Almasy (63), inzwischen Grand Prix-Richterin, seine Pferde. Der Start bei Olympia in Rio de Janeiro sollte im sportlichen Leben des Milliardärs der letzte Höhepunkt werden. Um sich diesen Traum zu erfüllen, kaufte er in Italien beim bekannten Dressurrichter und Turnierveranstalter Dr. Enzo Truppa im Dezember 2015 den damals 15-jährigen Rappwallach Eremo del Castegno, auf dem seine Tochter Valentina international sehr erfolgreich war, u.a. Weltcup-Dritte des Finals 2012 in Hertogenbosch. Einem on-dit zufolge habe da Rocha über eine Million Euro hingelegt. Eremo del Castegno wurde nach Südamerika geflogen, bestand dort aber nicht den Check der Veterinärkommission. Die Blutwerte nicht in Ordnung, und lahm war er auch. Und dann ging auch die nationale Föderation Italiens, FISE, gegen Truppa vor, denn im Hinblick auf Rio sollte ein Verkauf des Rohdiamant-Nachkommen verhindert werden, dafür löhnte sie ab 2014 bis Ende 2015 nicht weniger als 300.000 Euro. Die FISE wollte das Geld zurück und machte zusätzlich Druck, dass sie Vincenzo Truppa als Richter und Trainer suspendierte. Nach den Neuwahlen des Verbandes wurde Truppa wieder in alle Ämter zurückgeholt, und auf eine Rückzahlung der Fördergelder verzichtete die FISE auch.

Nachdem Jorge da Rocha die Aussage von Truppa aus der Gerichtsverhandlung erfuhr, er habe das Pferd verkauft, weil Eremo del Castegno nicht mehr sporttauglich gewesen wäre, entschloss er sich zu dem Offenen Brief an den Italiener. Schadenersatz will er nicht, aber er

hofft auf eine Reaktion seitens des Internationalen Verbandes (FEI).

Open letter to Vincenzo Truppa

Aware of the mention of my name in a legal suit before the Italian Court, in official statements from the Italian Federation of Equestrian Sports (FISE) and in the specialized press, I decided to reply openly.

Only recently, shocking facts involving the dealing of “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO” came to my knowledge. I believe that by now, with the quick spread of news in the internet, these facts are not unknown by a significant part of the equestrian dressage community. However, the unabridged story behind the purchase of “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO” remains to be revealed. I am stepping forward to make it public, motivated by the genuine belief that animal welfare is of paramount importance in our sport and that it will only be accomplished and preserved through the immaculate demeanor of all parts involved. Above all, decency and honesty must prevail. Anything or anyone not driven by these principles should never be part of the horse family.

Vincenzo Truppa, the former owner of “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO”, the horse I bought in December 2015, is the protagonist of a series of misleading acts that profoundly and negatively impacted the above-mentioned community, all the staff at Vila Quixote and myself, particularly. As an FEI member, I feel all other FEI members have been likewise affected.

Fact number one: “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO” was the subject of a legal contract, constituted to guarantee its participation in the Olympic Games, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2016.

According to this legal instrument, “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO” was to be kept at disposal of the Italian Equestrian Federation (FISE), to be ridden by Valentina Truppa, and represent Italy in the event. For this end, a substantial financial support was warranted throughout the years 2012-2015. I learned that EREMO was for sale. I was interested.

Fact number two: In the month of December 2015, Truppa addressed a letter to FISE, disclosing his intentions to sell “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO” and revealing the motivation for such a decision: Eremo was no longer fit for competitive purposes. At the same time, however, Truppa was addressing an email to me, stating that “the horse was never lame and that his word as a five star FEI judge was worth taking”, while vehemently and strongly objecting to my requests for more detailed investigations (namely MRI) on soundness issues of the horse. I felt obliged to believe in the word of a man working inside FEI’s heart.

Fact number three: While waiting for the results of the doping tests – and still giving full credit to Truppa’s statements and pleas- the deal was concluded, based on acceptable findings in the clinical examination of EREMO. In January 2016, I learned that the blood drawn for doping screening at the moment of the clinical examination had been discarded upon Truppa’s requests. Moreover, according to Mr. Truppa, “there was an agreement in this direction with the buyer”. This is not possible. I do not speak English. I never spoke to Mr. Truppa, nor have I ever sent him an email. The blood samples for drug screening were never sent to the laboratory due only to Truppa’s intervention, and without our consent or knowledge. All other blood tests were performed accordingly.

Now it is clear why soundness issues arose after the purchase. Truppa did not lie to FISE. There were health limitations to performance, as he states in his letter to the federation. At first manageable, later on these limitations implied in discomfort, and my decision was clear and straight forward: Eremo was not going to compete at such high costs.

You were right again Mr. Truppa, stating before court - while being prosecuted for contract violation and financial and moral impairment impinged to your National Federation- that participating in the Olympics was the dream of this 70-year-old man…

But that is a very small part of the dreams I hold dear. I dream to see everyone in the sport treat horses and people involved with all the due respect. I dream everyone in the sport share the same joy I experience when I walk in my stable every morning to greet my horses. God made us friends, me and Eremo, and lucky enough to have this experience together. He is always welcoming me, craving for his morning apples. And I make sure that he has a whole team working for his rehabilitation, a very very comfortable stall to relax meanwhile, and all the attention, respect and appreciation he deserves.

This seventy year-old man is not unknown to the Equestrian community. Besides having been riding for 30 years, sponsoring many international shows and the dressage sport in my own country and abroad, participating in the Olympic games was not new to me, as I have already represented Brazil in Sydney, as a dressage rider, in the year 2000.

From my part, I expect nothing from you. The suffering and damage caused by your acts are irreparable.

To finish, after having learned about the circumstances of the dealing of “EREMO DEL CASTEGNO”, it is not understandable that - with our so divergent principles and expectations – we stand as members of the same International Equestrian Federation. It is beyond my comprehension that the FEI, aware of these facts, still has your name in the list of Official

International Judges. Or that you have horses under your training supervision.

As I said in the beginning of this letter, above all, decency and honesty must prevail. Anything or anyone not driven by these principles should never be part of the horse sport industry. This is the reason I decided to come public, in hope horses' interests remain a priority, warranting long life all Equestrian disciplines. Documents (legal and private) that attest all the above-mentioned facts, follow attached.

São Paulo, June 18th, 2017.

FEI-Dressur-Boss Frank Kemperman

Frank Kemperman (62), Vorstandsvorsitzender des Aachen-Laurensberger Rennvereins (ALRV) als Veranstalter des alljährlichen Offiziellen Internationalen Reit- und Fahrturniers von Deutschland (CHIO), seit 2009 auch Chef des Dressur-Komitees im Weltverband (FEI) und damit im FEI-Präsidium, meinte, auf die Angelegenheit angesprochen: „Selbstverständlich kenne ich dieses Thema. Aber da es hier um Pferdehandel geht und dies nichts mit seiner Funktion als Richter zu tun hat, gibt es selbstverständlich keinen Kommentar." Und er sagte: „Wir können und wollen nicht beurteilen, wer was falsch gemacht hat."

So einfach sollte sich jedoch auch der Weltverband nicht aus der Affaire im leichten Trab davonschleichen dürfen…