

Riding Clubs, David Abbott, the steering committee comprises Alison Corbally and Avril O'Byrne from Horse Sport Ireland; Linda Young from the Association of Irish Riding Establishments; Mary Fitzpatrick from the Irish Pony Club and Show Jumping Ireland chairman Ronan Corrigan.

Ireland a world leader in coaching the coaches

By Siobhán English

UNDER its former title, now Horse Sport Ireland, the Equestrian Federation of Ireland can pride itself in setting up the biggest coach education training programme for equestrians in the world.

Thanks to the vision and drive of Irishwoman Joan Keogh almost 15 years ago, these coach education courses are now widely recognised, having not only been integrated into the system used by Coaching Ireland (formerly National Coaching and Training Centre) but also by the world's equestrian governing body, the FEI.

Having been modelled in McKee Barracks in the mid-1990s, it is not surprising that one of the Army's former top riders, Gerry Mullins, was behind this scheme right from the start. Down through the years he has seen these courses – Introduction to Coaching, Level 1 and Level 2 – grow into a worldwide success, he himself now being one of an elite group of tutors.

Also qualified as a tutor is

Susanne Macken, who, like Mullins, travels the world on a regular basis to share her expertise with other tutors, both now being part of an elite tutor team.

To date some 135 courses have taken place worldwide and as far away as Africa, Peru and Brazil. Only recently Mullins returned from conducting a session in Iraq. Equally committed to enhancing the standards of training worldwide is Liam Moggan, who is one of seven coach education development officers working with Coaching Ireland, equestrianism being one of his specialist sports.

While Mullins or Macken would work with tutors on equestrian skills, Moggan trains the tutor in coaching skills, so that their delivery is done as effectively and professionally as possible.

"I would spend 10 days working with tutors," Moggan said, "and any one of those tutors could then deliver to some 20 coaches. These coaches may then work with 20 riders each, which makes for a lot of people."

As well as his involvement with equestrian sport, Moggan has also worked separately with other athletes and for several years has been a key member of the team behind the former world champion snooker player Ken Doherty.

So how does this all work and how does one become an equestrian coach?

The HSI Coach Education Programme (geared towards

computer-based training programme designed with the horse enthusiast in mind. Participants will be trained to use their computers far more effectively, with modules that cover topics such as registering online, editing digital photography and video, designing brochures

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