

THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

AACHEN 2015

By Aya Amr

AACHEN, GERMANY:

AACHEN IS FAMOUS FOR ITS RICH HISTORY AND ITS CULTURAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE. THE CITY HAS A FLAIR AND ATMOSPHERE OF ITS OWN; THE ATTRACTIVE LAYOUT OF THE OLD CITY CENTRE, THE IMPORTANT HISTORIC MONUMENTS, THE WELLS AND BATHS OVER THE HOTTEST NATURAL SPRINGS IN EUROPE, THE BUSTLING ACTIVITY IN THE STREETS AND SQUARES, THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND QUALITY AND THE MANY RECREATIONAL AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES MAKE AACHEN AN EXCITING AND PLEASING WHOLE.





France's Kevin Staut



Spain's Sergio Alvarez Moya



Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro



Germany's Kristina Böring-Sprehe and Desperados FRH



France's Simon Delestre



Team Netherlands, Jur Vrieling, Gecco Schroder, Maikel Van der Vleuten, Jeroen Dubbeldam, Rob Ehrens.



Team Holland, Diebrik Van Sillhout, Patrick Van der Meer, Edward Gal, Hans Peter Minderhoud, Wim Ernes, chef d'equipe

Besides the presentation of the International Charlemagne Prize, the major annual events include the CHIO World Equestrian Festival. The CHIO in Bad Aachen is the annual meeting of world-class competitors in equestrian sports and each year the ultimate event. It is well-known for perfect organisation and tradition.

This event was first held in 1924 and since then they have been refining the mixture between the ultimate performance of horse and rider, and equestrian noblesse. There, sportsmanship is just as much a priority as the sophisticated presentation of a world-class festival of equestrian sport and this year's FEI European Championships was no exception.

SHOW JUMPING:

It was a breath-taking experience from start to finish; the course designer Frank Rothenberger presented an immense course that produced remarkable jumping and the best of great sport.

The leading world champions from The

Netherlands clinched team jumping gold. And it was the host nation who slotted into silver medal spot ahead of the surprising Swiss who moved up four places to take the bronze.

The black wavy planks at fence four was one of the bogeys of the track, and the massive triple combination that followed was also hugely influential, with the opening triple bar enticing horses down to a tall vertical and often leaving them very deep at the final oxer. The difficult four or five-stride distance between the big 1.80m-wide oxer at fence eight and the following planks claimed a large number of victims.

Dutch Chef d'Equipe, Rob Ehrens, was asked if he has a magic formula for success. "There is no magic formula, in our small country we just work really well together and it only takes half a minute to call riders and get them in position for championships. It's a great honour for me to work with four of those amazing riders, with their amazing horses. I'm a happy coach!" he said.

Dutch dominance in jumping continued at a persistent

pace when the leading world champion, Jeroen Dubbeldam, rode the brilliant SFN Zenith to victory in the individual final. Silver went to Belgium's Gregory Wathélet with Conrad de Hus while France's Simon Delestre and Ryan des Hayettes claimed the bronze in a two-round competition that kept spectators on the edges of their seats.

"You can only dream that it comes true, when you come here to Aachen, one of the most difficult places for a championship and one of the nicest, you know it's going to be a top battle. Everything has to be good, you have to be fit, your horse has to be fit, and then you can focus on the course. I had the luck on my side, and today it is a dream come true," said Dubbeldam.

DRESSAGE:

Team:

For the third time, the Netherlands claimed Dressage team gold and left Great Britain in silver and Germany in bronze. It was an intense competition, with the

result decided by a terrific performance from Edward Gal and Glock's Undercover NOP. However Great Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro produced the biggest score of the day, posting 83.229 to finish more than half a percentage point ahead of the Dutchman.

Dutch Chef d'Equipe Wim Ernes said that he expected his side to take team bronze at these championships, so when asked about what he thought of that after their win, he replied *"That was a few weeks ago, since then we just practiced and got better, and so today we won!"*

Grand Prix Special:

Great Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and her superstar gelding Valegro, clinched Grand Prix Special gold. There was plenty for the host nation to celebrate too when Kristina Bröring-Sprehe recovered from a much less impressive test in the team competition and claimed silver with Desperados FRH. The Netherlands' Hans Peter Minderhoud and Glock's Johnson TN took bronze.

FreeStyle:

It was double-gold for Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro when they added the Freestyle title to their Grand Prix Special win. But this medal was particularly hard-won, with Germany's Kristina Bröring-Sprehe only 0.25 percent off Dujardin's winning score when taking silver with Desperados FRH, and Spain's Beatriz Ferrer-Salat produced another sensation when claiming the bronze with Delgado.

Talking afterwards, the record-breaking rider said, "It was only the ones (one-tempi changes) that let the performance down. I think he's got a thing with them now, he's done it all week. Yesterday in the last one he made a mistake, outside he's been really good with them. It's only one movement at the end of the day and it has cost me, but I was really happy with the rest of it."

VAULTING:

The atmosphere in Aachen's Deutsche Bank Arena was at an all-time high, with Vaulting fans getting together on Facebook prior to the event to coordinate their colours. Spectators in the north stand wore black, while those in the east wore red and in the west stand they wore yellow to represent the host nation flag.

Pas De Deux:

The leading world and defending European champions Austria's Jasmin Lindner and Lukas Wacha were always favourites to take the title. Once again they combined power, balance and seamless transitions throughout their two-minute programme.

Lindner and Wacha completed on a final score of 8.853 for gold while Pia Engelberty and Torben Jacobs (GER) rounded their score up to 8.725 for silver and Evelyn Freund and Stefanie Millinger (AUT) took the bronze with 8.557.

Squad:

It was even more tense in the squad competition, with nerves and pressure affecting some of the strongest sides, while others really rose to the challenge.

The leading world champions from Germany, Team RSV Neuss-Grimlinghausen, ran into trouble with two dismount falls and another in a triple movement. However, such was the complexity of their programme, that high horse scores and artistic marks earned 8.863 and brought their final score line to 8.597. Switzerland's Team Lütisburg final overall score of 8.104 left them over 4.5 points behind the German champions, but only 0.42 ahead of the bronze medalists from France.

Male Individual:

There was real electricity in the air as Jannis Drewell and his grey horse, Diabolus, began the final test of the competition. In his costume, representing a monk in orange robes and with his musical score from Kung Fu Panda, he showed extraordinary suspension and amazing speed, even managing to include some kick-boxing as he racked up big scores.

Combined with his results from the Compulsory and Technical tests along with his first Freestyle, he was left with the winning total of 8.369, ahead of Thomas Brusewitz with 8.343 and

Viktor Brusewitz, whose score wound up 8.157.

German coach Ulla Ramge, when asked about having three German vaulters on the podium: "I hoped for it! It was always possible because these guys showed that they could win. They all competed in four rounds of competition here and they needed to keep their concentration over the four rounds, but they produced the right performances at the right time so it happened!"

Female Final:

Switzerland's Simone Jäiser held on to the lead she established in the technical test to scoop gold at the Vaulting female final. The 28-year-old showed great body control and strength in the Final freestyle, and couldn't be overtaken despite a brilliant performance from Germany's Corinna Knauf who had to settle for silver, while Austria's Lisa Wild took the bronze.

REINING:

Italy claimed Reining team gold ahead of Germany in silver and The Netherlands in bronze.

In a field of 40 competitors, and with 8 horse-rider combinations to go, the podium was determined by the performance of Italy's Giovanni Masi De Vargas aboard the 7-year-old Quarter Horse mare by Smart Spook and out of Sailors Dance, the young Italian rider posted a 221.5. Equalling the top score of the day was Germany's Grisha Ludwig and Shine My Gun thrilled the crowd and

they secured Germany's European team silver.

"I am simply thrilled," said Italian team coach, Filippo Masi De Vargas. "This squad is made up of young riders, the future of our discipline, and they were just great, very professional and full of enthusiasm."

Giovanni Masi de Vargas did it again in the individual competition and took gold, while the Germans took silver and bronze medals with Grisha Ludwig and his teammate Elias Ernst.

"Earning two gold medals here is unbelievable and so emotional, I cannot thank my team enough, our coach and the president of the Italian Equestrian Sports Federation (FISE), Cav. Vittorio Orlandi, for being here to cheer for us," said Masi de Vargas.

DRIVING:

Michael Brauchle (GER) is the new individual European Driving Champion after putting everything on the line in the final phase of the European Championships to win the marathon and overtake IJsbrand Chardon (NED) in the individual standings. The bronze individual medal went to Koos de Ronde (NED).

"I was able to use my best wheeler horse again, which I had to miss in the previous two competitions," Brauchle said. "I started very fast and the horses got better and better after each obstacle. I drove at full risk, and I was at my best performance!"

The team standings mirrored the 2013 results. The Dutch successfully defended their team title, while the German hosts fought hard and took home the silver medal again, while the Hungarians slotted into third for the bronze.

Source of information: FEI

