



OLYMPIA INTERNATIONAL HORSESHOW 2019

DUJARDIN DELIGHTS WITH FREESTYLE WIN IN DRESSAGE

By Louise Parkes/ FEI

CHARLOTTE DUJARDIN PRODUCED A SUPERB VICTORY WITH MOUNT ST JOHN FREESTYLE BEFORE AN ECSTATIC HOME CROWD AT THE FEI DRESSAGE WORLD CUP™ 2019/2020 WESTERN EUROPEAN LEAGUE QUALIFIER IN THE GRAND HALL AT OLYMPIA, LONDON (GBR). AND TO PUT THE ICING ON THE BRITISH CHRISTMAS CAKE, HER COMPATRIOTS CARL HESTER AND CHARLOTTE FRY LINED UP IN SECOND AND THIRD.



It was an evening of great theatre, with Dujardin's charming 10-year-old mare producing a stunning test for a mark of 87.520 to take the lead when fourth-last to go, only for a technical hitch to delay the scores of the three who followed. Still waiting for the final result, the riders were all sent back to the stables while Santa took over the arena for his Christmas Finale. But finally the red carpet was rolled back out again, and it was Dujardin who led the British victory gallop.

She was delighted with the performance of her mare who has clearly matured a great deal since showing her massive potential at last year's FEI World Equestrian Games in Tryon, USA where she claimed two bronze medals. Freestyle's freshness and freedom of movement, the elegance and height of her passage and the expressiveness of her extended canter were just some of today's highlights. And the horse really seemed to be enjoying herself, her big ears pricked as she gave her rider her full attention.

"It's only her third time doing that test, she's very

inexperienced at Freestyle and I'm so pleased with her. The atmosphere was buzzing, it was a full house and I could really feel it when I rode in. But she's coping better and I couldn't have asked any more from her!" said the winning rider who, though still only 34 years old, is a legend of the sport following her world-beating career with the now-retired Valegro.

Her friend and mentor, Hester, followed her into the ring and put a score of 84.470 on the board with a lovely performance with *Hawtins Delicato*. *"A personal best, I can't believe that at my age!"* laughed the 52-year-old who has long been a huge influence in this sport. He was sitting back in the stable area when he learned his result - *"one of my girls texted me and said you got an amazing score - it was a bit of a weird way to hear about it!"* he added.

Fry was second-last to go, and the 23-year-old, who alongside Dujardin and Hester was a member of the British side that finished fourth at this summer's FEI European Championships,

produced a score of 82.620 with the 10-year-old stallion *Everdale*. This was good enough to pip the final partnership, and last year's Olympia winners, Germany's Frederic Wandres and Duke of Britain who finished a close fourth with 82.550 this time around.

Dujardin confirmed that she has both the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the FEI Dressage World Cup™ Final 2020 in Las Vegas, USA in her sights now. So her plan was *"Just to carry on doing what I'm doing and see how we go as we prepare for Tokyo. I'm hoping to get to Vegas in April, so I'll go to the qualifier in Amsterdam in January and maybe another after that"* she explained.

FUCHS ON FIRE AS THE SINNER SHINES

Switzerland's Martin Fuchs scooped his second win of the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ 2019/2020 Western European League at the London International Horse Show at Olympia, London (GBR) where Austria's Max Kuhner lined

up second ahead of Belgium's Niels Bruynseels in third.

Partnering his top ride, the lightning-fast grey *Clooney*, Fuchs took the third leg in Lyon (FRA) by storm, and in the eighth round of the 14-leg series he galloped to victory with a stunning performance from *The Sinner*. He's the reigning European champion, and looks set to take over the No. 1 spot on the Longines World Rankings as 2020 gets underway after an incredible run of recent form.

He also became the first Swiss winner of the Olympia leg of the FEI World Cup™ series in 29 years. The 27-year-old rider wasn't even born when his uncle, Markus Fuchs, stood top of the podium at the London fixture back in 1990.

Just six horse-and-rider combinations made it through to the jump-off, and Fuchs was fulsome in his praise of Irish course designer, Alan Wade.

"The first round wasn't crazy big, but Alan set a great course as he always does - it was another of his masterpieces!" the winning rider said.

It was definitely no walk-in-the-park, with the relatively small Olympia arena jam-packed with fences and an intense atmosphere in the packed Grand Hall adding to the pressure. Only six of the 37 starters qualified for the deciding round but it was a classic, Fuchs, who was second to go, putting it up to the rest with a great ride that saw him take a brave turn to the wall, now the fourth fence on the track, and a super-tight line to the penultimate oxer followed by a great gallop to the last. Throwing down a time of 31.99 seconds he then sat back and watched the remaining four give it their best.

Austria's Max Kuhner followed with an extraordinary second clear from the hugely promising eight-year-old gelding Elektric Blue P, but their time of 33.83 seconds was no threat. However as German ace, and three-time FEI World Cup™ champion, Marcus Ehning set off with Cornado NRW he clearly meant business only to get too close to the penultimate oxer for four faults in 32.17 seconds.

Great Britain's Scott Brash decided to put some

jump-off pressure on his latest shining star, the 10-year-old Hello Jefferson, but when the second fence fell then there was only Niels Bruynseels and his 10-year-old Delux van T & L standing between Fuchs and victory. And for once things just didn't go his way, none of the distances coming up nicely for the brilliant Belgian and his big horse with a long stride, so they stayed clear but had to settle for third place behind Kuhner in second and Fuchs at the head of affairs.

"I was early to go so I had to take all the risks to put the pressure on the others and everything worked perfectly today!" Fuchs said. He was of course delighted with The Sinner who belied his name this afternoon. "It was Denis Lynch (IRL) who gave him his name and he was already a good horse for Denis", he explained. He's had the 11-year-old gelding since the beginning of the year and they made their first major appearance together at CSIO Rome in May.

All photos by Kit Houghton/ FEI



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