

SHOW JUMPING AT THE WEG



The new World champion Ireland's Dermott Lennon and Liscalgot

The atmosphere in the Chapin Stadium during the second week was totally different from that of the first when the dressage competitions had been held. It was obvious that the majority of visitors to the WEG had planned to see only their favourite sport rather than the Games as a whole. Show Jumping aficionados are evidently even **more** partisan than those who supported the dressage events and they took their enthusiastic support to almost rowdy levels as the cream of the world's riders took centre stage.

During the two weeks of the WEG we experienced not only the anticipated blazing sun and blue skies, but also torrential rain, thunderstorms and **fog!** To everyone's surprise the Show Jumping competition commenced in a fogbound stadium leaving the riders to pick their way from fence to fence! Fortunately it lifted during the morning and we settled down to enjoy the team event.

My first impression was that a great deal of imagination and creativity had gone into the course quite apart from its' technical aspects since the fences nearly all had Spanish themes such as castanets, Moorish architecture and water features, fans and flamenco dresses - even an assortment of hats, all of which added enormously to the visual appeal of the event. The Spanish course designer Avelino Rodriguez Miravelles is to be congratulated. I only wish that some of the better class UK shows would take this aspect of Show Jumping more seriously since from a spectator's point of view it certainly enhances the experience of the event as a whole.



Tim Stockdale and Fresh Direct Parcival at full stretch

That these really were **World Championships** was proven by the large number of nations represented - many of which are not always considered to have an especially strong tradition of equestrianism. Certain facts soon emerged - namely that the French, the Swedes and the Irish were going to make their presence felt and were going to mount a strong challenge to the Germans (the probable favourites to take the team gold) and that the British were **not** going to be making an impact of any kind. In fact so poor was the performance of the British team that our future in the top flight of Show Jumping must now be in serious doubt.

The team lacked its' two most stalwart members - the highly experienced Whitaker brothers, John and Michael and I couldn't help feeling that we would have been better served by their inclusion whether or not they had suitable 'horsepower'. Robert Smith was another whose experience would have been welcome. This is not to denigrate the efforts of the team but neither Mark Armstrong or Scott Smith will have fond memories of these Championships where frankly they looked outclassed and above all, under horsed!

Di Lampard (Abbervail Dream) and Tim Stockdale (Fresh Direct Parcival) both failed over a line of fences that admittedly were tough but nevertheless they were cleared by many other riders. It comprised a pair of uprights (designed like houses) with just a few strides to the water followed by a huge parallel to finish. Tim did look to be going really well on the attractive grey and we were holding our breath in the hope of a British clear but he unaccountably had the first 2 uprights down without looking wrong at them and then had a foot in the water. Di Lampard's round went wrong in much the same way. Tim's was the team's best performance but even so he finished outside the top 25. It as very disappointing for him and in his case it was probably just bad luck.



Germany's Lars Nieberg and Adiantus make a steep but perfectly balanced landing



Bronze medal winner Peter Wylde on Fein Cara

More surprisingly the Germans also had a few problems over the final line of fences - which just for once were beautifully sited right in front of the majority of the spectators giving a great view of the action. In the first round three of their team had four faults there, in fact even Ludger Beerbaum and the lovely Gladdys S wasn't clear.

The Americans didn't enjoy a particularly good first day but both Peter Wylde on Fein Cara and Elizabeth Madden and Judgement were faultless in the second round; and Peter Wylde went on to have another clear - which resulted in his inclusion in the top four riders for the individual medals. Funnily enough their supporters seemed less vocal than those who turned up to cheer their dressage team. In terms of decibels the loudest cheers were accorded to the Mexicans since the locals adopted them as their own. Another great favourite of the crowd, Brazil's Rodrigo Pessoa the reigning World Champion did not have things go his way since remarkably he failed to qualify for the final 24 in the individual with Baloubet de Rouet. He looked extremely



The exiting world champion Rodrigo Pessoa

annoyed when he had a refusal in the big treble across the arena, since the horse had already jumped two clears and he was still well placed at the time.

The Swedish team put up a remarkable performance especially since their leading rider proved to be Helena Lundback on the diminutive mare Utfors Mynten. They went for everything and their final jump the second round over the large parallel took the breath away. Deservedly Helena made the final band of four riders in the individual competition and although she eventually finished fourth it was still a terrific achievement - and none of the other riders managed to ride a clear on Utfors Mynten!

The Dutch and the Belgians were in close competition with Germany and although they didn't make the best start in the Speed Section the Belgians then benefitted from the double clears of Stanny van Paesschen and Jos Lansink plus a single clear by Peter

Postelmans in the final round, giving them a zero score for that leg. This was good enough to take them up the placings to earn them their first World bronze medal, and they were obviously really thrilled by their success when they paraded after the medal presentation.

The Irish were holding their own although Cian O'Connor had a nasty fall during the opening team round and had to withdraw. Peter Charles and the striking grey Corrada had made a good start in the initial speed round but had 2 down in the first of the team rounds and four faults in his final round. However it was his younger compatriot Dermott Lennon and Liscalgot who was to completely steal the day since he went on to take the individual title on the closing day of the games.



Belgium's Stanny van Paesschen and O de Pomme

Interestingly the grand sire of Liscalgot was none other than the great French stallion Galoubet who used to be ridden by Gilles Betran de Belanda - who is still a member of the French team. And what a wonderful team it was! Above all, they were superbly mounted on stallions who are the result of a dedicated breeding programme which was simply reaping a just reward.



Gilles Betran de Belanda on Crocus Graverie

It was 20 years since Gilles Betran de Belanda rode the great Galoubet in the Dublin World Championship - this time he was riding Crocus Graverie who had had a good round in the speed competition and just four faults in the final round. Reynald Angot and Tialoc M had a clear in the second round and Eric Lavallois had a clear in the final round. That left everything riding on their last to go, Eric Navet riding the extraordinary Dollar du Murier - an incredibly athletic horse with a huge jump. He seems to require tactful riding and certainly gets it from his rider who is an outstanding horseman. Eric Navet knew that they had one fence in hand to clinch the team gold for France as the Swedish team had a total of 12 faults in their final round - both teams being virtually level pegging going into the round.



An ecstatic Eric Navet!

The moment Eric Navet and Dollar du Murier landed clear over the water the crowd erupted and yet he kept his nerve and cleared the last parallel just for good measure! He was exultant, saluting the crowd over and over and proceeded to gallop the length of the arena with both hands raised in joy... Dollar du Murier showing his own pleasure with some very exuberant bucks after the medal ceremony.

Eric Navet went on to join Dermott Lennon, the USA's Peter Wylde and Helena Lundback in the individual final. Sadly by then I was making my way back to Seville airport and a flight home. Dense black clouds lowered to the horizon and

threatened to make that journey most unpleasant, the contrary weather making itself felt to the last. Back at the Chapin Stadium the individual final took place in which all four riders had just a few minutes to get to know each other's horses before riding them over an extremely testing course, a format which suited the Irishman best. Years spent riding anything and everything around the show circuits of his native land and Britain paid off, Eric Navet finishing second and Peter Wylde in bronze position. A good spread of the medals but overall the French took the WEG in Jerez by storm. It seems in every sphere they are excelling these days - endurance, eventing, even vaulting seem to come alike to them but I suspect that the team gold in the Show Jumping was their most valued prize of all...



The jubilant Gold medal winning team