

World Equestrian Games 2006

Daily Diary

by Chef de Mission, Will Connell

Sunday 3 September - WEG draws to a close
Saturday 2 September - Another impressive performance from Karen Bassett
Friday 1 September - Fantastic marathon from Karen Bassett
Thursday 31 August - Standing ovation for George Bowman
Wednesday 30 August - Show Jumpers 8th overnight
Tuesday 29 August - Show Jumping kicks off with speed competition
Monday 28 August - Looking forward to Show Jumping, Driving and Reining
Sunday 27 August - Individual Gold and Team Silver for Eventers!
Saturday 26 August - Roller coaster Cross-country day for Team GBR
Friday 25 August - Eventing team third overnight.
Thursday 24 August - Eventing team lying sixth after first dressage day
Wednesday 23 August - British Dressage team finish in very commendable sixth place
Tuesday 22 August - First day of Dressage leaves British team in Bronze medal position
Monday 21 August - Endurance competition underway
Sunday 20 August - Vaulting and Eventing teams arrive
Saturday 19 August - Dressage team arrive
Thursday 17 August - Advance party and Endurance team arrive

Sunday 3 September

The final day of the World Equestrian Games has now arrived and today we saw the exciting horse swapping jump off between the last four in the Show Jumping. A record three women riders made it into the final but the eventual victor was Jos Lansink.

It was also the individual reining today, another exciting event with a dead heat between the first two places, forcing a rein-off between America's Tim McQuay (the most successful reiner of all time) and Canada's Duane Latimer who was the eventual victor of the gold medal.

And so the whole competition draws to close. The 576,000 spectators have all left for home, as have the 61 nations, 852 horses and 773 competitors.

Now we look forward to Kentucky 2010, when we will be back. There is work to be done between now and then but we can look forward with hope for the future.

Saturday 2 September

Today was the first round of the individual Show Jumping final and the final day of the driving.

Michael Whitaker, our only rider in the Show Jumping had an impressive, faultless second round, but an unfortunate fence down and 2 time faults in his first round pushed him into 8th place overall.

The Cone driving went well for the drivers today with Karen Bassett having a beautifully driven clear round bringing her up another 4 places to finish 25th overall. We can only regret the problems she had on the first day, which no doubt had a great effect on her final position. The team finished 9th overall out of 16 teams.

Friday 1 September

The marathon phase of the Driving took place today and we saw a good performance from the British team, and a notable performance from Karen Bassett which made up for her disappointment in the dressage. She finished 15th in this particular stage which pulled her up from 48th to 29th overall.

George Bowman had a good round with his inexperienced horses but had a problem at one obstacle, dropping him down to 20th place.

Thursday 31 August

The final round of the team Show Jumping took place today seeing Britain finish in 9th place overall with only Michael Whitaker qualifying for the Individual competition at the weekend.

Michael is currently lying in 14th which is only just over one fence behind the leader. His horse, Insul Tech Portino looks to be growing in confidence as the competition continues so he can go into Saturdays challenge with hope of improving that position.

The Driving team moved into their second day of dressage today with 72-year-old George Bowman getting a well deserved standing ovation from the crowd at the end of his test - he is competing in his record breaking 16th World Championships. His test was brilliant, receiving 50.30pens which leaves him in 9th place over night going into the marathon tomorrow.

Wednesday 30 August

The Show Jumpers continued with the second leg of their competition today. Consistent performances from all four team members means the quartet are currently holding 8th spot on a total score of 21.9 penalties, going into the final and deciding round tomorrow.

Tuesday 29 August

News just in this morning - Regrettably, Marius Claudius (ridden by Robert Smith), has sustained a small injury since his arrival and after 3 days of veterinary treatment the horse is considered not fit enough to compete. Therefore their place will be taken by Nick Skelton riding the grey stallion, Russel in the Show jumping competition which kicks off today.

The first round is the speed competition, where scores count towards both Team and Individual placings. The British team have made a good start; John Whitaker produced the best performance with a faultless round leaving him individually in 28th place. Michael Whitaker lowered just one fence to leave him in 46th place.

The team are currently in 11th place, as the competition continues with two nations cup rounds, tomorrow afternoon and Thursday evening to finalise the team positions. With only just over 2 fences lying between us and the Dutch team who are currently leading there is still everything to play for.

The four-in-hand driving also begins tomorrow with the dressage phase, fingers crossed for both teams.

Monday 28 August

It was a hectic and exciting weekend but the Games are far from over with the Show Jumping, Driving and Reining competitions all still to come over the next week.

Away from the "field of play", all are in good spirits despite the weather being constantly unkind with rain showers every day. The Organising Committee have coped superbly with the weather, although the Driving Stables are surrounded by a sea of mud!

The Driving and Jumping Teams have both arrived and are settled in; There is one more Team to arrive; the Reining Team who are due to arrive on Tuesday.

Andy Thomas, our Team human physiotherapist, had a very busy 1st week keeping competitors and staff "on the road"; his mobile physio truck has proven a god send.....it has the facility to turn out endless cups of tea and coffee!!

Sunday 27 August

It's been a long weekend and a roller coaster ride! All the Eventers passed the Horse Inspection this morning and we filed in to the Grandstands for the Show Jumping. The results say it all; GBR horses had one fence down between them - fantastic! However, it was a close run thing with Zara not hearing the starting bell, but the results are in the book; Individual Gold and Team Silver. Yessssssssss! A fantastic performance all round.

But WEG for the last few days has not just been Eventing, oh no. The Vaulters have been stepping up to the mark; solid Compulsories and two excellent Freestyles left Team GBR in 5th place (achieving their target). The Team have raised their game over the last 12 months are biting at the heels of the medal winners; this is a sport where Great Britain is very much on the up and preparations will start now for 2010. Joanne Eccles was our most successful individual, finishing in 11th and beating some serious medal hopes in the process. British Vaulting is in the zone!!

The Dressage competitions have now completed, with the British Team performing to expectation, hitting their target right on the nose. Yes, there is room for improvement and the focus now moves to the 2007 European Championships in Torino; the Team will need to be top 5 in order to qualify for 2008 - a big ask but very achievable. Emma Hindle was a star, reaching the Freestyle final and Laura Becholtshaimer coped superbly with her first World Championships, she clearly has a long and illustrious career ahead of her. With Wayne Channon and Sandy Phillips also producing solid performances, this is a Team that can move forward with a positive future and Great Britain should get behind them.

Saturday 26 August

So to Cross Country day; all the riders knew that the Course was testing and that it was unlikely to be a dressage competition. But who would have predicted the day we experienced?

The going was excellent and the weather perfect for the horses. The stats say it all; Oliver, Daisy and Zara were clear inside the time, Sharon went clear with a few time faults and Mary and William both picked up 20 faults for a refusal: look a little wider and the results are even more difficult to understand with many of the most experienced riders in the world having a refusal; Andrew Hoy, Klimke, Algotsson, Nicholson, Karen O'Connor etc etc.



It was probably one of the most exiting, nail biting but successful days cross country the sport has seen at a Championships for many many years. Within Team GBR there is a mixture of elation (we are still in Team Silver with Zara in Individual Gold) and disappointment at what might have been.

For detailed day by day reports of the Eventing competition please visit British Eventing's website.

Friday 25 August

The second day of the Eventing dressage followed today. William Fox-Pitt and Zara Phillips both performed good tests, which left Team GBR in 3rd after the completion of the Dressage phase, just behind Australia, with Germany out in the lead. Oliver Townend was disappointed with his test but Sharon Hunt was still all smiles as she is joint 13th at the end of play today. Individually, Zara is in 5th overnight and William is in 8th.

Thursday 24 August

Today was the first day of the Eventing dressage competition, with three of the British competitors riding today. It was a disappointing but not disastrous start leaving the team lying in sixth place over night with two strong riders to go for the team tomorrow - William Fox-Pitt and Zara Phillips.

Mary King performed a stylish test despite the pouring rain but was disappointed with her mark of 51.9, to leave her in 13th position overall at the halfway point. Daisy Dick, also riding for the team, had a rotten time in the arena following a very promising warming up session. Her horse, Spring Along, refused to settle in trot at the start of her test and she is consequently 29th.

The best performance of the day came from Sharon Hunt, riding as an individual, who rode a superb test to be placed 6th.

The team are far from despondent however, as having now seen the cross-country, it is clear that this competition will be about more than just the dressage. The course is bigger and more demanding than expected so there is still a very long way to go.

Wednesday 23 August

The second day of dressage followed today and despite slipping from third to sixth place the team are pleased with their performance, finishing only seven points behind bronze medal winners, the USA.

Emma Hindle performed an outstanding test on Lancet, scoring 70.458% to finish 13th overall as the best placed British rider. Sandy Phillips, on Lara, also put in a strong performance to score 68.292%. All four team members have qualified for the next round of the individual championship, Friday's Grand Prix Special. More details can be found on the British Dressage website.

Vets inspections took place for Vaulting and Eventing today, all the British horses passed ready to start their competitions tomorrow.

The Eventing team goes into tomorrow's competition in pursuit of their fifth World Championship Team Gold Medal, fingers crossed for them!

Tuesday 22 August

The torrential rain meant that the temporary stables flooded last night; so at 8.45pm the Endurance staff and

grooms, who had been up since 4.30 a.m. were trying to put a base down of chipped bark in order to allow the horses a comfortable night. Their efforts were successful and all the horses appear well rested and comfortable today.

Today is the start of the Dressage Competition. At time of writing, Laura Bechtolsheimer and Douglas Dorsey had just completed their Test, scoring a creditable 67.292%. Wayne Channon competes later today and it seems that the Germans and Dutch will fight it out for Team Gold; we look forward to an interesting battle!

By the end of the day Wayne Channon had added to Laura's excellent performance on his horse Lorenzo to put him in eighth place, with Laura in ninth. This places Britain in third place overall raising hopes of a first World Dressage Championship team medal. The United States and Sweden are lying uncomfortably close in Fourth and Fifth place which should make for an exciting day tomorrow as the last two riders compete; Sandy Phillips on Lara 106 and Emma Hindle on Lancet 2.

As expected, Germany and Holland are lying in first and second place, respectively and Germany look well placed to clinch the team gold medal tomorrow.

Monday 21 August

The Eventing team trained well today and appear to have traveled well; the dressage gurus report that they look good so fingers crossed!

The race started at 6.30am with ideal weather conditions and approximately 170 horses setting off into the dawn. Great Britain had strong hopes of finishing in the top 5 of the teams and the day started well but, as the weather deteriorated, culminating in torrential rain, so did our luck.

We lost our individual at the 2nd Vet Gate and then lost 2 team members at the 4th and 5th vet gates. This removed us from the Team Competition but we did get Christine Yeoman home in 17th and Ann Jobson in 46th which was a great effort on everyone's part. It was disappointing that we did not get placed in the team competition but the Endurance Team is on the way up.

All the dressage horses passed the horse inspection today and look very well; ready for the competition to begin tomorrow.

Sunday 20 August

The Eventing and Vaulting teams arrived safely today and all the horses, staff and riders are happily settled.

Saturday 19 August

The Dressage and Endurance teams arrived safely in Aachen and are settled in their accommodation, the endurance in temporary stabling and the dressage horses in permanent stabling.

The temporary stables were a little wet as they are at the bottom of a slope but the rain has done nothing to dampen spirits and all horses, competitors, grooms and staff traveled well and are settled.

The accreditation system has worked well and gone very smoothly and is a credit to the organizing committee.

Thursday 17 August

The advance party arrived at WEG yesterday and spent the day confirming bookings with the 8 hotels being used by Team GBR. Preparations in Aachen seem to be very well organised and efficient with the Accreditation Centre now up and running under the leadership of Astrid Schorn .

Definite Entries were submitted today for Eventing and Vaulting and the Endurance Squad are settled into their training base near Aachen as they arrived last weekend . They are in good heart and have been busy familiarizing themselves with the area and terrain over which they will race; morale is high!

Jenny Ellis, Team GBR's Stable Manager arrived tonight and will, tomorrow, start to prepare the stables for the arrival of the horses. Jenny has worked for the Whitakers, Geoff Billington and most recently, Richard Davison; her experience and knowledge of Aachen will be invaluable to Team GBR.

The weather is warm and humid with intermittent showers; there has been a good amount of rain over the last couple of weeks so the going should be spot-on. The Opening Ceremony is on Sunday and it is yet to be announced who will have the honour of carrying the Union Flag.