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NEWSLETTER - June 2009

The Equestrian World Class Programme

Welcome Welcome to the latest World Class Newsletter, with major championships approaching fast it is very busy here in World Class. Our riders, both Performance and Development, continue to impress in the national and international arena while the programme continues to support classes that showcase the greatest talent in this country. As you know, we are constantly striving to improve and that goes for our staff as well as our riders so we are focusing on coaching development and making the approach more coherent that we are certain will reap future rewards. We have also undergone a very useful "brainstorming" session, chaired by UK Sport and attended by representatives from outside equestrian sport, looking at how we can better attract and look after Owners.

Will Connell, Performance Director

Celebrating World Class Dressage at Royal Windsor

Richard Davison and The Countess of Derby's Hiscox Artemis won the inaugural World Class sponsored Grand Prix Kur at The Royal Windsor Horse Show on a score of 72.05%. The competition, designed to show case the best of Britain's up and coming dressage talent and devised in conjunction with British Dressage, allowed riders and horses across the World Class Programme the opportunity to compete at this prestigious show, ahead of the Alltech FEI European Dressage Championships to be held at Windsor in August.

"It was a bit of a training exercise for everyone and a great opportunity for the all the riders to come and compete in the atmosphere of the big Castle Arena," said former British dressage team member and World Class dressage team captain, Richard. "The winning is not important but his attitude and relaxation in the ring is and that I was delighted with. The atmosphere at Windsor can be a challenge for dressage horses - there's so much going on and lots to see so it was fantastic to be able to school in this sort of environment. We made no mistakes today and his confidence and harmony is really coming on side; it's another very good stepping stone in his competition career."

World Class Development rider Sarah-Jane Elmslie and her own Wellington Masterplan scored 68.65% to take second place with fellow development rider Gemma Green and Showtime close behind on 68% for third.

The World Class programme also sponsored a class for potential international dressage horses to compete at Prix St Georges level where Charlotte Dujardin with Carl Hester and Roly Luard's Valegro took the top honours.

Not for the first time Charlotte beat her mentor who had to settle for second with Sasha Stewart's stallion Uthopia. It was not only a first time at this level for the eight-year-old but also his first competitive outing for two years.

"I am wrapped with that," said Carl. "He has such a good temperament and a lot of talent so I kept him at home training

as I didn't see the need to overshadow him and I am thrilled with the way he conducted himself in such a grown-up manner."

Former show jumper Michael Eilberg, who has recently moved onto the dressage Development squad, took third place with his former show jumper Torino.

"It was decided that Torino was too good at dressage to jump," said Michael. "The yard at home is more focussed on dressage so when he switched, I switched,"

Hear more from Richard Davison and Carl Hester, they talk about these new classes and also their hopes ahead of the European Championships on the Team GBR website - <http://www.equestrianteamgbr.co.uk/news-detail.php?id=278>

Horse Hero provides a window on World Class

Horse Hero, a video website which shows how top equestrians look after their horses at home and at competition, visited a dressage development squad session in May.

This produced the first three videos in what we hope will be a new series of videos which offer viewers a unique insight into the UK Sport funded World Class programme and how it operates.

In part one you can meet some of the World Class support staff including strength and conditioning coach Carys Jackson, vet John McEwen and horse physio Vicky Spalding. It also follows Amy Stovold through her training on the day and shows Anne-Marie Perry warming up Aristo. Part two focuses on Horse Hero blogger Gemma Green and Showtime. Followed by part three where we catch up with World Class physio Andy Thomas, discipline co-ordinator Caroline Griffiths and follow Nicky Crisp's session.

You can view the videos on the Team GBR website - www.equestrianteamgbr.co.uk in our new video player. Horse Hero are also providing a great selection of videos for the Team GBR site, at the moment you can find out more about

Puissance victories for World Class riders

World Class Development rider William Whitaker shared first place with cousin Ellen Whitaker, in a thrilling Puissance class at the British Open. After five rounds, three riders had made it to the final round, William with two rides, Ellen and Derek Morton to challenge the opposing 7' 2 ½" inches wall.

William went first riding Cyber Space and cleared it with great style; followed by Ellen who was equally stylish in her execution of clearing the wall meaning her and William would tie for first place. However, Derek was still in contention to join them, but his ride Teddy Bear slid a brick from the wall. William entered with his second ride Leonardo and together they masterfully jumped the wall clear making the final result a joint win for William, on both Cyber Space and Leonardo, and Ellen on Ladina B.

William Whitaker clinched another Puissance victory at Royal Windsor riding Cyber Space, winning with the wall standing at 7ft. Development rider Daniel Nielson, riding in his first puissance was 2nd riding Pikolino.

World Class riders excel at Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials

World Class Performance rider Oliver Townend clinched victory at the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials – his first Badminton title. The 26-year-old, riding his long-time partner, Edward and Robert Nicholson's homebred Flint Curtis, survived a nerve-racking show jumping round under pressure. The

combination used the 'life' of a fence in-hand halfway round the course. A second pole down would have handed the trophy to former winner and fellow Performance programme rider, William Fox-Pitt.

William Fox-Pitt and Idalgo, who jumped clear, benefited from others' mistakes and in the end it was extremely close with the pair finishing just 0.7 penalties behind the Oliver to clinch second place. "Idalgo has been sensational all week," said William. "He's been a bit unlucky in the past but we've always believed in him and his owners – George and Jane Apter – have been very loyal and as he proved he's been well-worth waiting for." William also finished fifth on Macchiato and won the Frank Weldon trophy for the youngest British-owned horse in the top 12.

A clear round brought British-based Australian Sam Griffiths and Happy Times up into the frame to take third place, with Italian first-timer Roberto Rotatori and Irham de Viages, in fourth.

Several development riders also impressed at the event, including Harry Meade who, riding the 19-year old Midnight Dazzler, the oldest horse in the line up, finished in 10th place. He produced a competent clear cross country round inside the time and jumped a rare clear round in the show jumping. Harry was awarded the Cotswold Life trophy for the best local rider.

Emily Llewellyn made her Badminton debut riding Society Spice, where the combination finished in 22nd place. She was presented with a saddle by the Worshipful Company of Saddlers as the best U25 British rider, not entitled to wear the adult Union Jack Badge, and who has not previously won the saddle. Emily also won the Laurence Rook Trophy, presented to the highest placed British rider who has not previously completed Badminton.



Development Squad sessions and training

Home visits or squad-training sessions in all four disciplines have taken place over the last couple of months across the Development programme.

The eventing programme has held two squad-training sessions, one that focused on dressage training with Angela Tucker and Nick Burton and show jumping techniques with Peter Murphy.

The dressage programme held a monitoring/assessment day with World Class trainer, Emile Faurie and GB senior chief selector, Nick Burton.

The para-dressage programme held a review and training session where the riders worked with World Class coaches, Nina Venables, Angela Weiss and Erik MacKechnie. An open evening was also held on behalf of the Unicorn Trust for sponsors and guests, where all Development riders taking part. Emma Sheardown performed her new freestyle to music test and Erin Orford and Natasha Baker rode a pas de deux.

The various sessions utilised the range of support services, that have included strength and conditioning with Carys Jackson from the EIS, sports nutrition with Liz Purcell, sports psychology with Jennie Killilea, physiotherapy with Andy Thomas, as well as equine assessments with John McEwen, David Rowlands. Vicky Spalding, Jenny Hall and farrier Haydn Price. Russell Guire of Equinalysis provided video coverage of the ridden sessions.

Developing World Class Coaches

A new development in the World Class programme sees the continuous professional development (CPD) of coaches and other World Class staff extended.

Building on the conflict resolution day reported in the last newsletter, World Class cycling coach Dan Hunt took a day-long session with coaching staff. He talked about his own experiences and how to encourage athletes to 'buy-in' to a programme, both generally and specifically in relation to coaching.

The World Class programme is looking at opportunities to develop the relationship between riders, their home coaches and programme coaches. A session held during the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials began this process. All home coaches across all disciplines on the Performance programme were invited to discuss how this relationship could be improved. This will be repeated during Hickstead on 23rd July.

To build on this initiative, the programme is planning a World Class seminar which will be held in November. All squad and home coaches will be invited, further information to follow.

Youth impress in the BEF World Class Development Programme Championship

Ellen Whitaker won the BEF World Class Development Programme Championship at the British Open Show Jumping Championships at the NEC, Birmingham in April.

The class is sponsored by World Class to showcase the best of young talent in Britain, "The interest that the WCD Programme Championship class has generated among some of the best young show jumping riders in Great Britain signifies the importance they place on qualifying to compete in the Championship class," said World Class Performance Director, Will Connell. "With the high level of riding required in order to win this prestigious title, this demonstrates the value and importance of correct training and riding."

After the first round, there were five clears, and three riders went on to claim a second clear. Ellen clinched the title in 40.30 seconds, beating Tim Gredley, who completed in 42.78 seconds on Valente, into second place. Third place went to Lucy Guild on Titi D'Oase.

Besides training vouchers and prize money on offer, there was also a John Whitaker bridle, supplied by David Dyer of Frogpool Manor as the prize for the 'Style and Performance' award.

Swiss International show jumper, Markus Fuchs judged this award, and was very impressed with Development rider Daniel Neilson, to whom he awarded a mark of 9.75, but it was Ellen, who he gave the winning mark of ten, due to her flawless show jumping round.

As part of its sponsorship of the Championship, The World Class Development Programme funded the first place prize money at the six qualifying competitions, as well as training vouchers to the first six prize winners. The prize fund at the British Open totalled £3,000 with training vouchers to the value of £4,475.

