

## **Switzerland take gold in nail-biter, but Ben Maher is second individually**

The Swiss jumping team were celebrating after regaining the upper hand in a nail-biting contest for the Alltech FEI European Championships for Jumping in a rollercoaster competition where the medals were up for grabs right up to the final rider.

It looked as if Italy might secure the gold, their Natale Chiaudani having proved the sensation of the competition with the only double clear, but Daniel Etter had already gone clear for Switzerland and, when his team mate, Steve Guerdat, jumping very last of all, managed to produce a clear round under the highest of pressure, the Swiss squeezed ahead by 3.34 penalties.

“I was a little disappointed with my horse (Jalisco Solier) in the first round, but I knew the rest of the team was jumping well and I had to try and do the same,” said Steve. “It was a very tough course and a close competition. You didn’t know who had won until the last rider went, which is a great result.”

Natale was quick to point out that the Italian result wasn’t so surprising: “This is only the second time this group of riders has been together and we have been first (in the Meydan Nations Cup final in Dublin) and second (here). We’ve been working towards this all year.”

Italy’s new team trainer, Marcus Fuchs, was experiencing mixed emotions, as he has just retired from riding for the Swiss team. “He’s not always a nice friend in the daytime,” joked Natale Chiaudani, “but perhaps the the Italians need someone to whip them into shape”

Germany were consistent with three four-fault rounds in the second round to clinch bronze, just 0.75 of a penalty in arrears, while the Netherlands, despite the best efforts of Albert Zoer and the popular Oki Doki, who went clear in the second round and are lying third in the individual classification, just missed the medals in fourth.

Britain had a tiny window of opportunity left for silver, but it all hinged on Ben Maher jumping clear, his team mates having clocked up a few faults between and, it being such a close contest, Ben’s 5 penalties aboard Robin Hood, who was jumping magnificently, dropped the team to sixth behind France.

However, Ben is lying second in the individual rankings going into Sunday’s individual championship for the top-placed 30 riders, behind the Italian Natale Chiaudani.

Tim Stockdale also qualifies for the individual final – he is lying 24<sup>th</sup> on Fresh Direct Corlato after just the four faults in the second round – and Geoff Billington makes it at 30<sup>th</sup>.