

Dutch delight with gold, silver and bronze

In a night of high scoring, record-breaking and exciting dressage The Netherlands produced a clean sweep of the medals in the final grand prix freestyle to music at the Alltech European Dressage Championships.

And to the delight of the capacity crowd Edward Gal and Moorlands Totilas broke their own previous freestyle record, scoring over 90% - the first ever rider to break the 90% barrier.

From the moment he entered the ring the Dutch-bred stallion dominated the arena and entranced his audience with the combination of huge ground covering and elastic paces to a specially adapted compilation of classical music – with a modern touch – named ‘Totally Totilas’. At the final halt the crowd broke into rapturous applause – giving a unique reception for a dressage horse in Britain. There was even more cheering and whooping when the record-breaking score was announced. “I went into the arena thinking that we just had to do the best we could and to enjoy it – and we did both,” said Edward who admitted to some tears when he saw his score. “It is really strange to even think of doing better but I know, especially as he is only nine, that there are still some things that will improve and that he can do better.”

Grand Prix Special gold medallists Adelinde Cornelissen and the leggy chestnut Parzival added freestyle silver to their medal haul after a fluent and rhythmic freestyle demonstrating high scoring piaffe and passage. “I didn’t see Edward’s score but I certainly heard the reaction – I knew it would be really hard to beat him,” said Adelinde.

Third Dutch team member and reigning freestyle champions Anky Van Grunsven and Salinero had the unenviable task of following Totilas into the arena. Performing to the former winning arrangement Chanson L’Esprit – the pair had to settle for bronze, albeit on a score of 87.25% “I had heard the scores and I thought OK I will give it a try and I am very happy with my own test and especially proud of Salinero.”

British team silver medallist and individual bronze medallist Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris had the audience tapping their feet during their freestyle set to a medley of lively music by sixties pop group The Shadows – a performance that gained them another personal best score and fourth place. The Danish-bred chestnut produced some brilliant trot work and passage and piaffe spot on the beat but looked to be strong during the canter work. “It was a tough ride as he was distracted and not very manageable but he still produced some awesome moments,” said Laura who during the past three days has achieved unprecedented results for a British dressage rider.

British team silver medallists Carl Hester and Emma Hindle also made the cut for the freestyle – the first time that the full quota of three team members has got this far in a championship – and both received a hero’s welcome from the large British crowd. Emma and the Hannoverian stallion Lancet finished in eighth place after their test set to music from the film Spirit and Carl and Donald MacTaggart’s Liebling II in 10th with their freestyle to an instrumental compilation of Tom Jones music. “That was amazing – it was one of the best rides I’ve ever had,” said Carl who had only ridden the test twice before. “As we don’t get the opportunity to compete in

Britain very often to be here in front of family, friends and supporters is just brilliant and the horse has got to the end of the three days full of running – what a great way to finish.”

British Olympic judge Stephen Clarke, President of the Ground Jury for the Championships was again full of praise for the riders, horses and organisers of the unique combined dressage and show jumping Championship. “Tonight was the best night of dressage ever and this has been the greatest Championship – I can only congratulate the organisers on such a superb event.”