

THE NETHERLANDS GET OFF TO A GOOD START

Dutch riders Adlelinde Cornelissen and Imke Schellekens-Bartels got The Netherlands off to the best possible start in their quest for a second successive European team gold medal at the Alltech European Dressage Championships at Windsor Castle.

On her debut for the Dutch team Adeline and her chestnut gelding Parzival thrilled the spectators, fellow team members and judges alike to score 80.638% and take the lead at the end of the first day. Dutch-bred Parzival, by the former grand Prix dressage horse and leading KWPN stallion Jazz, impressed with particularly expressive and high scoring piaffe and passage tour. "I was thrilled with my score, especially as I broke my own record – I have never scored over 80% before," said Adeline. "Parzival is always reliable in his work and his piaffe and passage is always good. What I have to concentrate on is keeping his attention and making sure he doesn't get distracted. Yesterday he thought the arena was really spooky and the first time I could only get five metres through the entrance."

Imke Schellekens-Bartels and Hunter Douglas Sunrise are currently in second place with a score of 73.149%. "She felt in really good shape and was really good in the warm-up which gives you as a rider a good feeling. The surfaces are perfect and we are very happy with the surroundings – my horse felt really relaxed," said Imke.

British rider Carl Hester did not disappoint the home crowd to score over 72% and take third place with Donald Taggart's gelding Liebling at only the fifth show for the combination that has only been together for 10 months. Carl was particularly delighted with the result as his pre show training had not gone to plan. "I had a terrible few days last week – but thankfully Richard (Davison – chef d'équipe) got us back on track by suggesting that I gave the horse

three days off. He therefore came here fresh and fighting for this test – I really can't believe the result. Sometimes I think we forget that the horse does know what he is doing and we don't have to remind them everyday. And I have to say a big thank you to Donald who didn't even come to see his horse as he says he always brings him bad luck!"

Maria Eilberg who was making her senior British team debut and the first to ride for the team on Two Sox rode a secure and confident test to score over 67% and put the British team in third place. Germany is currently in second place with her riders Susanne Lebek (Potomac) and Ellen Schulten-Baumer (Donatha S) currently placed fourth and fifth respectively.

The team Grand Prix dressage reaches its conclusion tomorrow after another 26 competitors have ridden their tests. The competition starts at 09.30. British rider Laura Bechtolsheimer rides Mistal Hojris at 11.27 and Emma Hindle and Lancet are the ultimate British combination at 14.45. However at 15.00 the seats will be full to watch the latest World number one Moorlands Totilas and Edward Gal. The combination that at Hickstead broke the world record Grand Prix score are the favourites for the individual gold medals.