

BRITAIN EDGE CLOSER TO THE SILVER

After the third member of each team, The Netherlands still have a commanding lead at the Alltech FEI European Dressage Championships at Windsor Castle. However, just 0.935% separates the German and British team, with the Germans having the edge.

British rider Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris put up the performance of their life to score 76.638%, a British record for an international grand prix, and move into an individual second place. The score was a personal best for 24-year-old Laura and the big moving Danish-bred chestnut who demonstrated huge half-passes and extensions and a high scoring piaffe and passage.

“We have had a great season and I was hoping for a good score,” said Laura whose expression at the end of the test turned from pure concentration to one of delighted relief. “He didn’t want to stay still for long in the first halt and I knew I would have to get riding, but we had some great highlights and I felt as if I could sit on that piaffe all day.”

Twenty-five-year-old German rider Matthias Alexander Rath made his senior team debut a memorable one, scoring highly enough with the 14-year-old Oldenberg Sterntaler-Unicef to gain an individual third place at this stage and, significantly, keep his team ahead of the British.

“I am happy that my score has helped the German team,” said Matthias. “We have no hope of catching the Dutch so it is all about the silver medal now. There was big pressure for me and I was a bit nervous, although once I got on the horse I was fine.”

The test did not quite go to plan for The Netherlands' third rider Anky Van Grunsven. Fifteen-year-old Salinero showed some tension and mistakes and refused to settle for the final halt. The score, however, was enough for individual fourth place and had little effect on the team placing – The Netherlands have a lead of 10%.

“It was typical Salinero and I was not impressed,” commented Anky. “He got nervous and the weather didn't help - he needs 30 degrees! It is not the first time this has happened, but he usually settles as the days go by, and it wasn't all bad there were nice half passes, canter zig zag and piaffe and passage – however he is old enough to know better.”

After a high-scoring performance from Patrick Kittel and Watermill Scandic HBC, the Swedish team have now moved ahead of the Danes, holders of the Olympic bronze medal, into fourth.

The team competition reaches its climax later this afternoon. All eyes will be on final British rider Emma Hindle and Lancet and final German rider Monica Theodorescu on Whisper as their scores could well decide the team medal position – the score is dependent on the best three scores. And, of course, everyone will be here to see if Dutch wonder horse Moorlands Totilas can repeat the world record-breaking scores he and Edward Gal achieved at Hickstead last month.