

THE NETHERLANDS WIN BY A DISTANCE – BUT BRITAIN CLAIMS A SECOND TEAM SILVER

At the end of the Grand Prix, the flags of The Netherlands were flying high as they duly claimed the team gold medal at the Alltech FEI European Dressage Championships – their second consecutive European team gold medal, having deposed Germany of her reign of European Championships in Turin in 2007.

Even before the final combination, Edward Gal and Moorlands Totilas, entered the arena, The Netherlands were celebrating and, after the much anticipated high score from Totilas was duly delivered, they were able to extend their winning score by more than 17%.

The British riders, however were also able to turn the chance of team silver to reality, and thanks to a well-presented and executed test, under pressure-cooker conditions, from the team's ultimate combination – Emma Hindle and her Dutch-bred breeding stallion Lancet – were able to move ahead of the German team. It was the second team silver for Great Britain who won their first at the 1993 European team Championships in Lipica.

The silver was only part of the achievement, as it is also the first time a British team has ever beaten a German team in dressage. Emma also became the first British rider to gain two team medals, having been a part of the team that claimed European team bronze at the 2003 Championships at Hickstead.

“The difference is that this year we are now a proven team whereas at Hickstead we were a young and inexperienced,” said Emma, who went into the arena knowing she had to score over 70.6% to go home with a silver medal.

“Lancet has been rather excited since he arrived here so I was a little careful in the warm-up and therefore perhaps he lost a little sparkle in the test.”

It was, however, as far as the judges were concerned, deserving of a score of 72.936% and Emma left the arena to a tumultuous reception from the home crowd. “It has also been the most perfect setting – the castle is the ultimate backdrop to ride in front of,” she said.

Swedish official Eric Lette, one of five judges for the Grand Prix commented; “This has to be the best team championship ever in terms of standard and quality of competition.

“We all also enjoyed it – it was a very exciting competition. But what was so good was that there were so many good combinations from all the different nations – and that can only be good for the future of our sport.”

Tomorrow the competitions for individual medals commence – for which Edward Gal and Totilas go forward as firm favourites. Today, the black Dutch-bred stallion impressed the crowds with his amazing off-the-floor paces earning many 10s from the judges, a unanimous verdict from the five judges and a final score of 84.085% - a record Championship Grand Prix score.

“I knew we had team gold but I wanted to ride as well as I could for the horse and I think I did,” said Edward who has ridden the son of Gribaldi for two years. “When I went into the arena he felt the atmosphere and was a little tense. After the walk I looked up and saw my score – it was good – and I was able to relax for the rest of the test.”

The Grand Prix Special for the top 30 combinations starts at 9.30am tomorrow (Thursday).