

Dutch jumpers lead as Britain climb to silver position at halfway

The defending European champions, The Netherlands, have taken a slender lead at the halfway mark in the Alltech FEI European Championship for Jumping, and Britain, as the only nation to score two clear rounds over Bob Ellis's technically demanding track, have made a meteoric rise from seventh to second at this stage.

An enthralling second round is guaranteed, for scores could not be closer and the price of just one fence can completely change the medal positions.

Switzerland, leaders after Wednesday night's speed leg, have slipped to fourth place, just behind Italy, whose Natale Chiadani jumped one of only four clears on Snai Seldana di Campalto to take them up to current bronze position.

Even the Dutch have failed to produce a clear round – with four faults apiece from Angelique Hoorn, Albert Zoer, who did well to keep his focus when a fence blew down, necessitating a stop, during his round, and Marc Houzager, who put a foot in the water - and there isn't even a fence between them and the Germans, who have crept up to lie in a dangerous fifth position.

Geoff Billington, second to go for Britain on Rosinus, raised the roof when producing the first clear, albeit with a time fault. Then Peter Charles backed him up with a five-fault round on Murkas Pom d'Ami, and, finally, Ben Maher produced a superb clear on Robin Hood W.

The only other rider to jump clear was Mikael Forsten on Isaac du Jonquet for Finland but, sadly, the Finns will be relegated as only the top 10 teams go through.

The top 10 teams go through to the second round: Netherlands, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, France, Ireland, Sweden, Norway and Austria.