

A golden first for Britain

EUROPEAN CIC CHAMPIONSHIPS, ASTON-LE-WALLS, NORTHANTS**
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By Sarah Jenkins

BRITAIN took gold in the SEIB European CIC** Championships for the first time, knocking Germany off the podium they have topped since 2005. Mary-Anne Carpenter led the British affront and secured individual silver in the process riding Alles Klar.

This contest is held every other year for riders who have never competed at four-star and have not completed a CCI** in the past two years.

As well as the normal phases of eventing, there is team dressage, where all six riders complete a test simultaneously. Things weren't looking good for Britain after this — the team was 20 points adrift of leaders Germany.

Team trainer Jonathan Chapman, who also came fourth, explained: "We didn't have the ideal warm-up due to confusion over which arenas we could use and consequently a couple of our horses were too fresh."

In their individual tests, all six team members — Jonathan, Mary-Anne, Rosalind Canter, Natalie McGoldrick, Emma Castle and Carol Pearson — upped their game to help close the gap, but still Britain lay outside the medals in fourth.

It was across country that Britain proved superior, despite the worst of starts. Natalie, the squad's trailblazer, came unstuck at the bounce into water (see box), and her ride, Promise Me III, required veterinary attention.

But team orders remained to take the direct route.



Mary-Anne Carpenter, who gets up at 5am every day to ride before work, takes individual silver and team gold for Britain on Alles Klar

British chef d'équipe Richard Waygood said: "My heart was in my mouth, but I didn't let on to the team. Natalie was unfortunate, her horse locked on and came in too quick."

The strategy paid off, as the remainder of the Brits cleared the bounce, despite a few — including Carol on Major Promise — having to sit tight.

Britain forges ahead

At the end of cross-country day, Britain held the lead. By comparison, only two Dutch riders completed, while Germany and Austria had two riders eliminated each.

Belgium fared better, with Frederik Smet (United) holding the individual lead, followed by Austria's Charlotte Dobretsberger (Excalibur MT) and Mary-Anne.

The technical showjumping track was not big, but a

lot of tight turns and the arena being on a slope caught riders out.

Jonathan's West Side nudged fence six to remove himself from medal contention. Mary-Anne had to go clear to secure bronze, and did so just inside the time.

Charlotte hung on to second place despite going hell for leather and bouncing four poles in their cups. And when Frederik hit the same brown poles that caught Jonathan out, and then took out the first part of the treble, Charlotte stepped up to take gold and Mary-Anne silver.

Mary-Anne, who works for Lotus Renault GP and is up at 5am every morning to ride, has had the now nine-year-old "Alfie" for six years, having backed him.

"Despite being warmblood, he's been getting faster cross-country this year," she said.

The pair has worked with trainer Richard on moving more forward into lower, wider fences, to encourage Alfie to spend less time in the air. "He can jump so high he almost scares himself," explained Richard.

The pair now head to Blenheim for the eight/nine-year-old class, as do Jonathan and West Side, who belongs to long-time patrons Robert and Felicity Norris.

Gold medalist Charlotte said: "My horse has always been good at dressage, but could stop across country," she said. "Training with Lucinda Green has changed how I ride. I used to make excuses — now I ride positively." H&H

INDIVIDUAL

Gold Charlotte Dobretsberger (AUT)
Silver Mary-Anne Carpenter (GB)
Bronze Frederik Smet (BEL)

THE BOGEY FENCE



The bounce of hedges into water at 19 caused problems, including two horse falls and one rider fall. Brit Lauren West was given 20 penalties and a yellow card after jumping the second hedge from a standstill.

British chef d'équipe Richard Waygood said: "You needed controlled impulsion. The left-hand turn before the fence set the horses up. Then riders had to give their horses a second to assess the fence before riding forwards. On landing, they had to use their legs to pick the horse up and ride on no matter what."

Results

Team. — 1. Britain 312.5; 2. Belgium 339.4; Germany 349.6; Ind. — 1. Excalibur MT (C Dobretsberger), AUT 407.2; 6.0=44.3; 2. Alles Klar (M-A Carpenter), GB 44.8; 0.8=45.6; 3. United (F Smet), BEL 42.0; 0.8=51.3; 4. West Side (J Chapman), GB 45.7; 5.2=49.9; 5. Castle Larchfield Purdy (E Castle), GB 49.3; 6.8=56.1; 7. Serano (J L Day), GB 45.7; 5.2=56.6; 8. Great Idea (C Jeffries), GB 50.8; 6.8=57.6; 10. Para Ti (C Smith), GB 47.4; 6.8=62.2; 12. Vermeer (R Canter), GB 59.5; 2.4=65.9; 13. Major Promise (C Pearson), GB 55.7; 6.4=62.1; 15. Fennell Now Or Never (K Honey), GB 66.10; 4.0=77.23; Bowling Cloud (J Greenwood), GB 53.8; 27.2=85.8; Royal Hedges (L West), GB 50.3; 36.4=92.7.



The gold medal-winning British team: Natalie McGoldrick, Mary-Anne Carpenter, Rosalind Canter, Emma Castle, Jonathan Chapman and Carol Pearson