

# Golden Brits defy the odds

Great Britain pulls off a sensational team gold for the first time in seven years, while Nicola Wilson lands an emotional first individual medal

European Eventing Championships, Strzegom, Poland

By AIMI CLARK

SEVEN years after Great Britain's last senior eventing gold medal, a team riding under the Union flag finally climbed back on to the top step of the podium after a spine-tingling week of personal bests, sheer determination and surprising form ups.

Nicola Wilson (Bulana), Tina Cook (Billy The Red) and Ros Canter (Allstar B) — together with pathfinder Oliver Townend on Cooley SRS — were sensational from beginning to end, led by Nicola, who won her first individual medal, a precious bronze.

Rapturous applause followed her out of the main arena and into the collecting ring, where an endless stream of excited people flooded to congratulate the British team.

"I'm still pinching myself," smiled Nicola. "This is a dream. Bulana has been a superstar all week; she's such a good friend to me and I'm honoured to ride her." Team GB hadn't won gold since William Fox-Pitt, Mary King, Tina Cook and Nicola Wilson's World Equestrian Games victory in Kentucky in 2010.

The last European gold came even earlier than that: in 2009 at Fontainebleau, where Tina also took individual honours.

This time, Britain fielded four horses contesting their first championship, an unproven jockey making her senior debut



Oliver Townend, Nicola Wilson, Ros Canter and Tina Cook win gold

(Ros) and another, Oliver, who was back on the team after a 10-year absence. So sceptics could be forgiven for questioning whether a 23rd European gold would happen in Poland, and so early in team trainer Chris Bartle and chef d'équipe Richard Waygood's new reign.

Although the stage lacked the likes of Australia and New Zealand, Britain had to contend with Germany, the defending nation, whose imperious European team gold run started way back in 2011, not forgetting the reigning Olympic champions, France.

Both nations fielded four of their smartest horses and riders, but France bombed in the second phase and Germany had to settle for silver, then Bettina Hoy — who had set a new individual European record in the first phase — had a cross-country fall.

They did, though, set a world record collective dressage score, which provided room to count a score with 20 cross-country jumping faults, so that Ingrid Klimke (Horseware Hale Bob OLD), Michael Jung (FischerRocana FST) and Julia Krajewski (Samourai Du Thot) could still take silver.

Sweden claimed bronze. They were the only nation to finish with four team riders and all four — Sara Algotsson Ostholt (Reality 39), Louise Svensson Jähde (Wieloch's Utah Sun), Niklas

## EVENTING EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

The story



Making her senior debut, Ros Canter steers Allstar B to the first British cross-country clear and eventual individual fifth

Lindbäck (Focus Filicous) and Ludwig Svensson (Paramount Importance) — featured in the top 15.

"We came to take a medal," said Swindon-based Ludwig. "It was the goal and we've worked hard for it."

### A BRITISH BATTLE

BRITAIN's female trio each pulled off personal bests in the dressage arena to put the team in the hunt in bronze position at this stage, and from there they kept rising.

A fierce cross-country course

Tyson's fourth-placed Billy The Red to be a championship horse and he was Britain's travelling reserve in Rio, but she confessed that after missing out on a place at the past two championships, she'd wondered if she'd ever be on a team again.

"I was thinking maybe retirement, but I love representing my country and getting a young horse on the team who will hopefully have many more years ahead of him keeps me young," said Tina of the 10-year-old, a top-10 finisher at both Badminton and Pau.

Ros Canter's performance riding her own and Caroline Moore's Allstar B was superior to that of many of the seasoned contenders around her. The pair, fifth and best Brits at Badminton, delivered the first British cross-country clear on Saturday morning and pulled off a stylish showjumping clear.

"I'm 5ft 2in and he's 17h3 so

demanding grisly determination and quick-thinking reactions to hold their charges on exacting lines moved the team up to gold, before they seized glory with three elegant showjumping clears in the tensest of atmospheres. They won with an emphatic 9.1 penalties in hand.

The week was topped off by

Nicola Wilson's shirry individual medal after she finished third, behind Ingrid Klimke and Michael Jung.

She partnered her Luhmühlen CCI\* runner-up Bulana, an 11-year-old belonging to James and Jo Lambert.

Nicola often uses the word feisty to describe Bulana, who can appear strong across country because she's keen.

"It's all in her head and we've worked at slowing things down in her mind," said Nicola. "She has tons of ability but doesn't act like a princess. She's getting better in every competition."

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home Focus Filicous with only time-faults (8.4) to add.

"It's hard work out there," admitted a red-faced Niklas. "Technical and twisty isn't the favourite for my horse and he had to work hard. He lost his back legs several times and that knocked the air out of him a bit."

When Allstar B galloped away from the start anything less than a clear round risked scuppering Britain's hopes for a medal. Ros

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There are exhilarating highs and disappointing lows in the final phase, where Britain maintain their grip on gold

A SUNNY Sunday began with a degree of anxiousness in the air, which would only become more suffocating as the reverse-order final phase progressed.

In total, 56 horses came forward to showjump after four were withdrawn overnight and three were lost from Sunday morning's final horse inspection.

The only well-placed casualty was Pawel Spisak's Banderas for Poland, who was sent to

the holding box and spun on reinspection while lying 11th.

With Cooley SRS out of the running for Great Britain, pressure was on the remaining all-female trio to secure a final score for the team — and they couldn't afford more than two fences down between them if they wanted to guarantee gold.

Just as she had the previous day, Ros Canter remained cool and composed to deliver a perfect clear aboard Allstar B.

Concerned glances were exchanged around the collecting ring when Billy The Red, whom Michael Jung pulling off a clear and despite seeing a long one and standing off an over at seven, crowd and at first napped away from the entrance. Once inside, he relaxed and, other than lightly rubbing five — white rails above a water tray — he executed a foot-perfect clear.

So too did Bulana, meaning celebrations began in the British camp before the final riders had even jumped. Gold was in the bag. Sara Algotsson Ostholt, the individual silver medalist in London, who narrowly missed out on gold due to a showjump down, and Reality 39 looked comfortable until the three-bar spread at fence

six, where the mare unravelled and went on to hit a further two fences. As a result, she slipped six places to ninth and Nicola Wilson moved up to individual bronze.

Gemma Tattersall was visibly disappointed when Quicklook V kicked out fence five and the third part of the treble at 11abc to fall three places to eighth. But there is more to come from this great pairing — and a clear round would have left them just outside the individual medals in fourth.

This piled pressure on Ingrid Klimke, for whom the showjumping has been something of a nemesis in the past.

She led Badminton on this horse this year, but lost the title when Horseware Hale Bob kicked out three showjumps and refused at one to wind up ninth, a galling scene reminiscent of the final phase in Luhmühlen six years earlier where she lost the individual European title with a cricket score. It wasn't

quite an impeccable clear — "Bobby" tapped the second part of the double at Sab — but it was effective. When she landed after the last, all 12 fences still in their cups and her first ever individual title safely in the bag, Ingrid couldn't hold back the tears.

"I'm just so, so proud and pleased because Bobby has done a wonderful job in all three disciplines," she sobbed. "He's such a special horse to me and now he has fulfilled my dream."

There were 15 clear rounds in total and 16 horses exceeded the time. Germany remained in silver and the Swedes held on to bronze, none of the remaining 10 nations that started getting near their total collective score.

And so Great Britain celebrated three magical



Composed Ros Canter delivers a perfect round on Allstar B



All clear: Tina Cook shows how it's done on Billy The Red

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## Individual scores

Horse & rider — \* denotes a team rider

		DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMPING	SHOWJUMPING	TOTAL
1	Horseware Hale Bob OLD (Ingrid Klimke, GER*)	30.3	-	-	30.3
2	FischerRocana FST (Michael Jung, GER*)	32.8	-	-	32.8
3	Bulana (Nicola Wilson, GBR*)	35.1	0.4	-	35.5
4	Billy The Red (Tina Cook, GBR*)	38.2	-	-	38.2
5	Allstar B (Ros Canter, GBR*)	38.6	1.6	-	40.2
6	Colani Sunrise (Kai Röder, GER)	37.1	3.2	-	40.3

## Team scores

Horse & rider

		DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMPING	SHOWJUMPING	TOTAL
1	Great Britain	35.1	-	0.4	35.5
	Bulana (Nicola Wilson)	38.2	-	-	38.2
	Billy The Red (Tina Cook)	38.6	-	1.6	40.2
	Allstar B (Ros Canter)	43.6	40	1.2	WD
	Cooley SRS (Oliver Townend)				WD
					113.9

ONLY IN HORSE & HOUND

## 'Bettina Hoy was sensational'

Sue Baxter explains how the arena allowed horses to show their best work

### OPINION



here — she showed ability to ride the transitions while keeping the energy, balance and thoroughness. Overall, Ros was incredible to ride with such courage and confidence at her first championship and she has a platform to work towards a winning test.

Sitting at B, it's difficult to see the extended walk as it's straight towards you, but often the steps are too short.

Many were too progressive in the first halt — they showed trot steps rather than going from canter to walk. Michael Jung was among those who stepped back in the transition. I gave him a mark of five, but the other judges couldn't see

Gemma Tattersall had very consistent quality in her test and didn't lose any marks. To get a higher score, she now needs to unleash Quicklook V's power. H&H

### THE VITAL MOVEMENTS

SOME movements are indicative of correct training.

Sue Baxter was a member of the ground jury at the European Championships. Her previous roles include president of the ground jury at the 2015 Europeans at Blair.

Picture by Peter Wilson