

Team GBR Olympic Discipline News June - December 2008

World Class Development Riders out in force at Bramham Horse Trials 2008-06-05

A number of World Class Development riders will be competing at the Bramham International Horse Trials this coming weekend, which boasts a number of Olympic contenders from home and abroad.

In the senior CCI*** competition, Ruth Edge is triple-handed with Fast Track, Mr. Dumbledore and Mayhem III. Piggy French rides What A Performance, while Olympic squad member, Lucy Wiegiersma is riding Beckli, therefore it will not be a surprise if, come Sunday afternoon, one of these three talented riders wins this renowned competition, and in the Event's 35th anniversary.

Meanwhile in the Bishop Burton College Under 25's CCI*** competition, three Development riders are amongst thirty-three young riders battling it out for the prestigious U25 title.

Reigning Junior European Champion, Laura Collett rides Rayef, this combination who won both Individual and Team Gold medals at the Junior Europeans last year in Avenches, Switzerland, will be making their CCI*** debut and will be amongst the favourites to lift this title. However, with the in form partnership of Gemma Tattersall and Nyali Beach, who won a CIC** in Barocca, Portugal early this year, they too must have a very good chance.

Izzy Taylor rides Briarlands Blackberry, a relatively new ride for her, but with the horse experienced at this level, and after encouraging runs at both Brigstock International and Chatsworth International events, this pairing could spring a surprise.

Vikki Underwood, World Class Development Programme Manager says, "The very best of luck to all the Development riders at Bramham International Horse Trials, and with the consistent results that these young riders are achieving on the International stage, they should all have a very good chance".

The World Class Development Programme, is Lottery funded through UK Sport and is designed to assist in the development of talented riders, with the best opportunities to maximise their competitive potential through an established training pathway that will see them progress onto the Olympic Performance Programme for 2012 and beyond.

Zara Phillips withdrawn from Olympic Eventing Team 2008-06-11

Following an injury sustained during training, Toytown ridden by Zara Phillips has been withdrawn from Team GB for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

A reserve rider and horse combination will now be selected by the British Olympic Association, after nomination from the British Equestrian Federation (BEF), to replace Zara Phillips and will be announced as soon as possible.

Zara Phillips commented:

"I am very disappointed not to have the opportunity to ride at the Olympic Games and feel that Toytown deserved his chance to go. However, with horses these things happen and we still have a very strong team, I wish them every success."

Simon Clegg, Team GB 2008 Chef de Mission said:

"This must be a huge disappointment to Zara particularly following the pair's success over the last few years. Naturally we now need to focus our full support on the rest of the team including Zara's replacement and give them every opportunity of competing to their full in Hong Kong."

Will Connell, Team Leader for the Equestrian Team commented:

"The British team are saddened by the news, especially for Zara and her team. We have a strong team of reserves and the team are now focused on trying to win medals."

Toytown is owned by BGC Partners & Associated Companies including Cantor Index, Mr James Blackshaw and Zara Phillips.

Para-Equestrian Team Nominated for Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games 2008-06-16

The British Equestrian Federation today nominated the seven Para-Equestrian Dressage riders for the ParalympicsGB team for the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. They are:

Grade Ia:

Sophie Christiansen riding the Para Dressage Training Trust's Lambrusco III

Anne Dunham riding Sally Ann Brown's Teddy

Grade Ib

Ricky Balshaw riding his own and Mrs Julia Lazzari's Deacon's Giorgi

Lee Pearson riding his own, Mr & Mrs David Pearson and Gillian Chinn's Gentleman

Grade II

Felicity Coulthard riding her own Roffelaar

Grade III

Deborah Criddle riding her own and Bruce Criddle's Pavaroti

Simon Laurens riding John Gamlin's Ocean Diamond

The squad features a mix of youth and experience, with Lee Pearson set to make his third ParalympicsGB team appearance and Anne Dunham her fourth. Six-time Paralympic gold medallist Lee has never been beaten at a Paralympic Games and Anne Dunham, at 59, is likely to be one of Britain's oldest athletes for Beijing. For Deborah Criddle it would also be her third Games and she will be hoping to build on her triple Gold at Athens in 2004.

20-year-old 2004 Paralympic Games bronze medallist Sophie Christiansen is nominated to return to the ParalympicsGB team for her second Games along with, 21-year-old Ricky Balshaw, 40-year-old Simon Laurens and 24-year-old Felicity Coulthard who are all making their Games debuts this summer.

Newcomer Simon Laurens comments, "I'm absolutely ecstatic and can't quite believe it! Since my first Prelim competition two years ago to the World Championships last summer it's been an absolute whirlwind but this is the ultimate. I always hoped that Ocean Diamond would be destined for Hong Kong, he's such a great little horse and really deserves to go."

Experienced Paralympian Lee Pearson comments, "You can never take selection as a given and I am stunned and delighted to be nominated to go to my 3rd Paralympics. I'm really looking forward to it - Gentleman is a young horse but he has been brilliant over the

selection trials. The hard work really starts now though and I want to wrap him up in cotton wool."

ParalympicsGB Chief Executive Phil Lane, said: "I am delighted to receive these seven nominations for the ParalympicsGB team for the Beijing Paralympics.

"Britain's Para-Equestrian Dressage riders have consistently performed well at Paralympic level, topping the medal table in Athens in 2004 and in Sydney in 2000 and I look forward to seeing this team attempt to repeat these past successes in Hong Kong this summer."

Para-Equestrian Dressage team manager David Hunter says, "It's been an extremely competitive period, all the selectors have been surprised and impressed by the standard - it certainly hasn't been an easy job. I am confident we have a strong team with an excellent support crew behind them that will be as well prepared as possible in 3 months time. We are all very grateful for the continuing support of UK Sport Lottery Funding for providing such important resources to the team. Good luck to all and commiserations to those riders who haven't been nominated."

British Equestrian Federation World Class Performance Director Will Connell comments, "Whilst there have been a number of athletes and horses in contention for nomination to the Para-Equestrian Dressage team, the seven riders and horses that the selectors have nominated represent a mix of experience and youth. The Team includes athletes who have medalled at Paralympic, World and European level, so this is an exciting proposition for the Games. I hope the Team will be well positioned to deliver medals in Hong Kong, where the Equestrian events take place."

The British Equestrian Federation has also named three reserve rider/horse combinations and two reserve horses. These are, in no particular order:

Reserves (rider/horse)

Joanne Pitt riding Mr & Mrs Robert Pitt's Estralita
Nicola Tustain riding the Berkeley Group's Rivaldo
Sophie Wells riding Nicola Wells' Touchdown II

Reserve Horses

The Para Dressage Training Trust's Nairobi
John Gamlin's Ocean Don Jon

The Selectors may nominate other reserve horses or horse/rider combinations in time.

The Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games opens on September 6 and closes on September 17. The equestrian events at the Games take place in Hong Kong at the Sha Tin Racecourse and will run from September 7 to 11.

At the Athens 2004 Paralympic Games Britain finished second in the medal table with a total of 35 golds, 30 silver and 29 bronze medals. With competitive standards continually rising and the dominant Chinese team taking the home advantage ParalympicsGB recognises that the 2008 Paralympics will be one of its biggest challenges yet.

Dressage and Jumping Teams announced for Beijing Olympic Games 2008
2008-06-25

The British Olympic Association (BOA) today selected the Dressage and Jumping riders to be part of Team GB for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. This completes the Equestrian team for the Games.

Dressage Team:

Laura Bechtolsheimer riding her own and Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer's Mistral Hojris,
Jane Gregory (nee Bredin) riding Greenlands Farm Ltd's Lucky Star
Emma Hindle riding her own Lancet

Jumping Team:

Ben Maher riding Mr Daniel Paul's Rolette
Tim Stockdale riding Mr John Boshers' Fresh Direct Corlato
Michael Whitaker riding Gillespie Equestrian's Suncal Portofino 63
John Whitaker riding Miss Rebecca Stones' Peppermill

Commenting on their selection the athletes said:

Laura Bechtolsheimer:

"It's very exciting, our whole season has been focused on selection but to have it confirmed still feels surreal, it hasn't sunk in. Mistral Hojris is very special and I feel privileged to have a horse like him to take to my first Olympics. We have come a long way together and I feel confident that he will give it everything."

Jane Gregory:

"I am in a state of shock! My goal this year has been to improve my riding and my training; we've been enjoying our international success so much and never dared to hope we would be in contention for an Olympic team position. I have ridden Lucky Star since he was 4 years old, he is an extraordinary horse and we are both preparing to give this all we've got."

Emma Hindle:

"I am thrilled to be selected again to represent Great Britain. I have a great horse in Lancet and I am confident that we should be able to perform well in Hong Kong."

Ben Maher:

"It hasn't quite sunk in yet. I can't quite believe that I'm going! Ten months ago my horse Rolette was jumping 1.40m National classes and I was having the worst year ever, however when she won the Maastricht and Mechelen Grand Prix's at the end of last year I knew I had a good horse. She's going from strength to strength and I believe her best is yet to come. To ride at the Olympic Games is everyone's dream – I feel incredibly lucky."

Tim Stockdale:

"I am over the moon! My mare Corlato has gone fantastically well and she deserves the opportunity to jump at the Olympic Games. It is great for everyone concerned; my Team at home, my owners and sponsors, who have all had belief in me. The Olympic Games is everything I have worked for and a huge honour. I am a very lucky man to have such a fantastic horse to ride".

Michael Whitaker:

"It is a great honour to be selected for my fifth Olympic Games. We have a great Team and I am very lucky to be riding such a great horse as Portofino 63."

John Whitaker:

"I am very pleased to be selected, Beijing will be the sixth Olympics I have been to. I think we have a good Team with a good chance of success and I have a good horse in Peppermill."

Simon Clegg, 2008 Team GB Chef de Mission said:

"I am very pleased to welcome the remaining equestrian members of Team GB on board. The mix of new and more established names makes this an exciting team to look out for in Hong Kong. All of the riders have done well to qualify and I wish them all the best in their final preparations before the Olympic Games."

Will Connell, British Equestrian Team Leader comments:

"The Jumping Team is truly a team of youth and experience. John and Michael bring to the Team stability based on their many years at the top of the sport; Tim, who has achieved so much, deserves his first shot at an Olympics and Ben has landed some excellent results over the last few months to demonstrate he is ready for his first Senior Championship Team appearance.

For the Dressage riders the road to selection has seen some challenges for all the athletes but Laura, Emma and Jane rightly deserve their shot at the Olympics. All have represented Great Britain before but this will be Laura's first Olympics. They know what they need to do to bring home a medal and I know they are focused, determined and ready for the challenge ahead.

Nick Skelton, as travelling reserve, will bring with him a huge amount of knowledge to the Jumping Team and will be instrumental in helping them perform to their optimum.

I wish them all the best of luck in Hong Kong, as ever we are grateful to the Owners, without whom there would be no Team."

The selectors also named a travelling reserve for the Jumping Team, this will be Nick Skelton and Lisa Hales' Russel. A Travelling reserve for the Dressage Team will be announced in due course.

Fantastic Facilities in Hong Kong

2008-06-26

As the equestrian events of the 2008 Olympic Games draw ever-closer, it is time to take a look at the excellent venues and facilities provided by the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) which will ensure that the Jumping, Dressage and Eventing horses and riders compete in optimal conditions.

Significant construction work, a world-class laboratory, 5-star stabling, a first-class veterinary clinic, mobile horse-cooling units and green waste management are just some of the principle features. These Games are breaking new ground in terms of attention to detail at every level. Innovative and well-established ideas are combining to create a safe, clean and functional sporting environment in which those coveted Olympic medals can become the entire focus.

The HKJC has invested over HK\$1.2 billion in creating venues and facilities for the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic equestrian events. Construction work has included the modification of the Hong Kong Sports Institute which is located next to HKJC headquarters at Sha Tin Racecourse on the outskirts of the city, while at Penfold Park, which lies at the very centre of Sha-Tin race-track, a training and competition area has been developed.

The Club has also provided facilities at the Hong Kong Golf Club and the Beas River Country Club for the cross-country phase of the Eventing discipline.

The venue was handed over by the HKJC to the organisers of the Olympic Equestrian Events - Equestrian Events (Hong Kong) of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Company Limited (the Equestrian Company) for a final dress-up on 26 May.

SHA TIN...

The main competition arena is located at Sha Tin and has a seating capacity of about 18,000 with a supporting warm-up arena. A total of 13 ancillary training rings include two for general use, five for Dressage, four for both Dressage and Jumping, one specifically for Jumping only and an indoor air-conditioned ring. Penfold Park also embraces an 800m cross-country training track and schooling area along with a 1,200m all-weather bridle path and a turf gallop.

Office and hospitality areas are available at the Hong Kong Sports Institute, but one of the most talked-about developments has been at the Olympic stable complex.

STABLING....

Construction started here in July 2006 and by May 2007 four blocks of air-conditioned stables, totalling 225 stalls, were completed and ready to accommodate 200 horses while another 25 have been set aside for reserves. Each stall measures 3.6 x 3.6 meters, which is bigger than normal Olympic standard, and each unit measures 6.4 meters at its highest point. The barns are designed to maximise the benefits of the 24-hour air-conditioning system which will have a set temperature of 23 degrees Centigrade. Cool and hot air will be prevented from exiting or entering the stable blocks by the provision of an air curtain, while additional circulation will be provided by ceiling fans and the louvred ceiling windows and stall-windows can be opened in case of air-conditioning breakdown.

Each stable will have an automatic drinker and a revolving feed bowl and each block will have ice-making machines producing 250 lbs of ice per day - an important ingredient in the cooling of horses after exercise.

For the first time ever at an Olympic venue a rolling box, measuring 20.5 square meters, will be provided to allow horses the opportunity to relax, stretch and play. Security measures include 24-hour CCTV covering all areas and security sensors at entry to each stable which will trigger an alarm in the event of an after-hours break-in.

STAYING GREEN

Wide walkways will be an important component of the stable blocks and, in keeping with the "Green" initiative of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, these will be made from recycled tyres as will the stable floors. Wood engineered from sustainable bamboo has been used in the construction of the stable blocks and all organic stable wastes including manure, food waste and bedding - straw, wood shavings and newspaper - will be collected and recycled using a vermicomposting process to produce organic fertilizer. This process was first put into action during the Good Luck Beijing - HKSAR 10th Anniversary Cup Eventing competition last August which served as a Test Event. Each day, 10 tons of waste from the Olympic stables went to the recycling plant where it was fed to earthworms. This August 100% of stable wastes from the Sha Tin Olympic venue will go through similar treatments and it is anticipated that more than 30 tons will be processed each day.

During site construction some 90% of trees at the Hong Kong Sports Institute were retained in their original positions while others were transplanted. At both the cross-country and core venues, 500 new trees and some 17,000 new shrubs were planted while fewer than 50 trees were felled, mostly because they were diseased or dying. Building work inside Penfold Park was sequenced to minimise the impact on the habitat of its resident bird population of egrets

during their breeding season, and energy-saving lighting systems will be in operation in both the stabling arena and in the main and training arenas.

VETERINARY SERVICES

The HKJC will make its Equine Hospital facilities and services available for emergency operations during the Olympic and Paralympic periods. Its operating theatre, anaesthetic and recovery rooms and clinical laboratory will be on call along with the 44-strong team that includes veterinarians, nurses, laboratory technicians, administrative staff and farriers. A separate Equine Clinic for diagnosis and treatment during the quarantine and Games period has also been built at the Olympic venue. Adjacent to the main stabling compound, it has two examination rooms, a dedicated pharmacy and 10 observation stables.

A forge and shoeing bays are situated beside the veterinary facility.

LABORATORY.....

Another "first" for the 2008 equestrian Olympic Games in Hong Kong is the provision of a world-class on-site laboratory. The internationally acclaimed Racing Laboratory at the Hong Kong Jockey Club will test equine samples for the presence of prohibited substances and will offer elective testing to teams so that samples can be assessed for the presence of medication, such as that used for travel sickness.

With a staff of 43 and equipment worth in the region of US\$8 million, the laboratory conducts tests on over 18,000 equine samples a year and is the FEI's sole Reference Laboratory in Asia.

MOBILE COOLING UNITS....

The welfare of the horse is, as always, paramount and state-of-the-art mobile cooling units are expected to play an important role in assisting the equine athletes throughout the Games. Manned by veterinary staff, they can be quickly put into operation and will be placed at strategic locations around the Eventing cross-country course at Beas River Country Club and the adjacent golf course in Sheung Shui.

THE LEGACY....

After the 2008 Olympics, facilities at the Hong Kong Sports Institute will be refurbished and upgraded to provide a much-improved training environment for Hong Kong's athletes. Sand footings from the equestrian arenas will be re-used to upgrade local riding school facilities and Penfold Park will be retained for public as an interactive equine park.

The HKJC is planning to build a Museum there to promote Olympism and to commemorate Hong Kong's historic hosting of the 2008 Olympic equestrian events.

By Louise Parkes

Thanks to the Hong Kong Jockey Club for supplying the information.

Text supplied by the Federation Equestre Internationale

Dressage Travelling Reserve announced for Beijing 2008 Olympic Games **2008-06-27**

The British Equestrian Federation have today confirmed that the travelling reserve for the Dressage Team for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games will be Maria Eilberg riding Ferdi Eilberg's Two Sox.

Worcestershire based Maria will travel to Hong Kong with the Team as a reserve rider and horse combination. She will also be there to offer support and assistance to the Team.

The Dressage Team consists of Laura Bechtolsheimer, Emma Hindle and Jane Gregory.

Lucy Wiegiersma withdrawn from Olympic Eventing Team and Replacements named **2008-07-01**

Lucy Wiegiersma withdrawn from Olympic Eventing Team and Replacements named

Shaabak ridden by Lucy Wiegiersma has incurred a minor setback during training which has prevented him from following the ideal programme for the preparation for the Olympic Games. It has therefore been decided to withdraw his participation.

As a result there are two vacancies within the Eventing Team (to replace Lucy Wiegiersma and Zara Phillips); the BOA have today approved the selection of the following new riders:

The two new team members will be:

Tina Cook riding Mr & Mrs Nicolas & Valda Embiricos & Mrs Sarah Pelham's Miners Frolic
Daisy Dick riding her own and Mrs Caroline Dick's Spring Along

Commenting on their selection the athletes said:

Tina Cook

"I am elated to be chosen, but someone's happiness is another's sadness, I have been in that position before and was convinced after Atlanta and Sydney that I wouldn't get another chance. I am thrilled for Henry (Miners Frolic) we've been on a fantastic journey since doing our first 3 star event at Bramham in 2007."

Daisy Dick

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to go to the Olympics. Now I have been given the chance, I want to give it everything we have. Pod (Spring Along) is an amazing campaigner; it's his 4th championship in a row. As a sportswoman it has always been my dream and will be amazing to represent my country on Pod."

Simon Clegg, Team GB 2008 Chef de Mission, said:

"Whilst we are naturally disappointed for Zara and Lucy we are fortunate enough to have incredibly talented and experienced riders to step in to the fold and I welcome Tina and Daisy in to Team GB and wish them well in their final preparations for the Beijing Olympic Games."

Will Connell, British Equestrian Team Leader:

"I am of course extremely disappointed for Lucy, who has worked so hard over many years to win her place in the Team; however, in Tina and Daisy we have two experienced campaigners who both have horses that should be able to turn in some excellent

performances at the Games. The Team remains strong, capable and focused on winning medals in Hong Kong."

Showjumpers finish third in Aachen 2008-07-04

The British quartet finished in equal third place in the fifth round of the 2008 Samsung Super League with FEI Series in Aachen last night.

The competition held under floodlights saw a popular home team win with The Netherlands taking second and Great Britain sharing third spot with the United States of America.

Nick Skelton with The Hales Family's Arko III finished the first round with nine penalties and then went on to jump clear in the second. Peter Charles riding Olga White, Mikail Muratov and Team Murka's, Murka's Rubert R had thirteen penalties in the first round and six in the second. Tim Stockdale riding John Boshers' Fresh Direct Corlato left all of the fences standing but clocked up just a single time penalty in each round and John Whitaker with Rebecca Stones' Peppermill finished both rounds on five penalties.

2008 Samsung Super League with FEI Series

Round 5 – Aachen

1st Germany - 16 penalties

2nd The Netherlands - 20 penalties

=3rd Great Britain - 21 penalties

Nick Skelton - Arko III - 9/0

Peter Charle - Murkas Rubert R - (13)/(6)

Tim Stockdale - Fresh Direct Corlato - 1/1

John Whitaker - Peppermill - 5/5

=3rd United States of America - 21 penalties

5th Sweden - 27 penalties

6th Ireland - 29 penalties

7th Switzerland - 49 penalties

8th Belgium - Retired

Great Britain now holds third place on the Samsung Super League Leaderboard behind Germany and The Netherlands. The next round of the 2008 Samsung Super League with FEI Series takes place on Friday 25th July 2008 at the All England Jumping Course, Hickstead. For more information please visit <http://www.hickstead.co.uk/>.

2008 Samsung Super League Leaderboard

Standings after Round 5

1 GER 32, 2 NED 30.5, 3 GBR 23.50, 4 USA 21.33, 5 BEL 19.50, 6 SUI16.08, 7 IRL 13.83,
8 SWE 5.75

SAMSUNG SUPER LEAGUE WITH FEI – 2008

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Round 1 – La Baule FRA 5 – 11 May, Round 2 – Rome ITA 22 – 25 May, Round 3 – St Gallen SUI 29 May – 1 June, Round 4 – Rotterdam NED 18 – 22 June, Round 5 - Aachen GER 1 – 6 July, Round 6 – Hickstead GBR 24 – 27 July, Round 7 – Dublin IRL 8 – 10 August, Round 8 and Final – Barcelona ESP 18 – 21 September

Para-Dressage Rider Sophie Christiansen inspires ParalympicsGB Campaign 2008-07-04

Sir Paul McCartney has recently launched a £2 million fundraising campaign for ParalympicsGB to support athletes heading to the Beijing Games, as well as to invest in the future of disability sport in the UK both in the run up to London 2012 and beyond. BT - as a partner of ParalympicsGB - has helped them to create and run the campaign, which was launched during Location Location Location at 8.50pm on 2nd July on Channel 4. Following this the ad can be viewed at www.bt.com/paralympicsGB. Donations can be made online, by calling 0800 1114321 or texting SUPPORT to 82010.

The first, a brand ad for ParalympicsGB, created by Team Saatchi and directed by Luke Scott, Ridley Scott's son, has Sir Paul's iconic Live and Let Die as the soundtrack. Featuring a number of established and emerging athletes with a disability, the film is a moving and inspiring piece that not only shows the skill and ability of the athletes but also the excitement of competing. The second ad, a charity appeal featuring Sir Paul himself asking the British public to make a donation to ParalympicsGB, will be screened from 7th July.

Sir Paul commented on the films "I met leading Paralympic dressage rider Sophie Christiansen and was completely blown away by her skill, dedication and the fact that she had won a gold medal for Britain, so I felt I had to do something. My suggestion was simple why not create an ad that would highlight the work of ParalympicsGB and call on the British Public to donate much needed money. It was the start of a truly amazing effort from all those involved most of whom gave their time for free."

Phil Lane, CEO of ParalympicsGB comments: "We are delighted that Sir Paul McCartney has been involved with this initiative. His commitment has been incredible and this fundraising campaign would not have happened without him. We also extend our thanks to our partner BT who made the ad possible and donated the first ad space. Our athletes are amazing people but the team needs a lot of financial support in order to compete."

Suzi Williams, Group Marketing & Brand Director at BT says: "BT has a long history with the Paralympic movement, and is a proud partner of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012. This ParalympicsGB campaign is a fantastic next step in our relationship .It expresses the uniquely powerful contribution of Paralympians to Britain's sporting legacy. In many cases, they are some of our best hopes for gold medals, and BT is proud to be helping them be the best they can be. "

ParalympicsGB provides crucial and fundamental support to all competing Paralympic athletes. From nurturing talent, supporting coaches, providing medical and sport science support, acclimatisation and training facilities, to financing travel to competition, ParalympicsGB needs money to make sure this inspirational team of athletes is able to train and compete at the highest level.

BOA Take London 2012 Hopefuls to China for Olympic Experience 2008-07-04

Today the British Olympic Association (BOA) announced the athletes and coaches invited to take part in "Britain's Olympic Ambition 2012" programme.

The programme, designed to enhance athlete medal success at the London 2012 Olympic Games by providing talented potential team members with an opportunity to experience the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, will see athletes from 33 disciplines spend seven days in Macau and Beijing during the 2008 Olympic Games.

Whilst there, athletes will visit the Team GB preparation camp in Macau, the Olympic Village and the Athletes' Lodge. They will also have a press conference fronted by their mentors, Olympians like Denise Lewis, Ed Coode and Alison Mowbray. In addition participants will be given the opportunity to watch two competition sessions for their specific discipline.

This programme's focus is based around providing sports specific event exposure and to replicate, as closely as possible, an athlete's overall Olympic experience.

Commenting on their involvement:

Said Simon Clegg, Team GB Chef de Mission for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games:

"This programme is unique worldwide and is expected to provide a real competitive edge to the participants. With the BOA's aspirational target to finish fourth in the overall medal table in 2012, and research showing that a significantly high percentage of medallists at any Olympic Games have attended previous Olympic Games, this experience can form a vital part of the athletes preparation for Olympic success."

Ed Coode, Britain's Olympic Ambition 2012 Mentor, said:

"As a rower I found the first Olympics that I went to in Sydney 2000 to be totally different to anything I had experienced before as a sportsman - even though I had raced at three world Championships prior to this. Although the race and competition are essentially the same, the time spent building up to and at the Olympics is unlike anything an athlete would have experienced before. At the same time the scale of the hype and the press interest only fuels the novice competitor's fears that he or she has to do something different at the Olympics. I think this certainly contributed to me underperforming in the Coxless Pairs event in Sydney 2000.

What I hope to achieve through the Britain's Olympic Ambition 2012 programme is that the young, novice, athletes of 2012 actually achieve 100% of what they are capable of at the London 2012 Olympic Games and their performances do not suffer simply because it is their first games. The only way of helping them prepare for the Games is to let them experience it first hand."

Gabriella Whelan (Football) said:

"I was made up when I heard! I'm just really excited to go out there and get a feel for it all. London 2012 is a big target of mine and I hope that it will make me work even harder towards my goal."

Brian Eastick (Football Coach) said:

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity for us to see the standard of all of the other teams. It's not often you get a chance to experience the Olympics and I'm delighted that some of our athletes will be able to do so prior to 2012."

Frances Peters (Sailing)

"When I found out I'd been selected to take part I was really shocked. I just thought 'wow', and what an amazing experience it would be. How many people get the opportunity to have such an insight into the Olympic Games?"

"I've really no idea what to expect from being in China, but I'm sure I will learn so much from it and that the experience will be really inspirational."

Dave Evans (Sailing)

"It's pretty exciting - I've been out to China before with the Optimist squad when I was a junior, but everyone's said it's so different out there now."

"I'm sailing with (double Olympic medallist) Simon Hiscocks at the moment and he's taught me that the single most important thing in an Olympic campaign is experience. If you can't be there competing then the next best thing is to be able to observe, so I hope that the experience of being out there with the team will help me take that extra step forward and be ready for 2012."

Steve Lovegrove (Sailing Coach)

"We know that athletes are far more likely to succeed at an Olympic Games if they've experienced one previously, so this is a unique opportunity for the sailors and myself to get the inside track and find out how the team focuses on maximising its winning chances at the world's biggest sporting event."

Kirsty McWilliam (Triathlon) said:

"I am extremely excited to be part of this programme. To be able to experience the Olympics first hand is something that not many people get to do and I feel very lucky to have been selected to go. Obviously in 2012 I hope to be competing and not just watching!"

I think it will be a great opportunity to see what happens at the Olympics and will hopefully prepare me better for when I may be going to the London 2012 Olympics myself.

I also think going to Beijing will motivate me even more to reach the London 2012 Olympics because I'm sure it will be a great experience and I hate just watching and not competing in races."

Mhairi Spence (Modern Pentathlon) said:

"It's a very exciting opportunity to be a part of the Britain's Olympic Ambition programme. It's a really good idea to give future athletes the chance to go into an Olympic environment and see for themselves how things work. It will also be a valuable opportunity to meet and mix with athletes from a wide range of different sports, and to make some new friends."

Sally Conway (Judo) said:

"It will be a fantastic experience to be in Beijing and to be around Olympic athletes. The programme will give us all such an amazing insight and help us to understand what the Olympics are all about, which will me prepare for 2012."

It will be a hard four years leading up to London but years I am looking forward to it."

The following athletes and coaches will represent equestrian:

Dressage

Jane Bartle-Wilson (Coach)
Charlotte Dujardin (Athlete)
Daryl Thickett (Athlete)
Sarah Millis (Athlete)

Eventing

Peter Murphy (Coach)
Christopher King (Athlete)
Laura Collett (Athlete)
Francis Whittington (Athlete)

Show Jumping

Tina Goosen (Coach)
William Whitaker (Athlete)
Daniel Neilson (Athlete)
Charlotte Platt (Athlete)

William Fox-Pitt and Mary King's horses selected for Beijing Olympic Games 2008 2008-07-10

Following Barbury Castle Horse Trials the Senior Eventing Selection Committee has named the horses that William Fox-Pitt and Mary King will ride in Hong Kong. William will ride Mr Philip Adkins' Parkmore Ed and Mary will ride Edwin & Sue Davies and Janette Chinn's Call Again Cavalier.

The Olympic horses will have one final outing at Aston Le Walls on 18th and 19th July, however some horses may not run Cross Country.

Visit the new FEI Olympic website for more interesting facts on the Games 2008-07-20

Visit the brand new FEI Olympic website www.fei.org/olympics

Do you want to know all the latest news about the forthcoming equestrian Olympic Games in Hong Kong, or to look back at previous editions and recall some of the greatest moments? Do you want to check out the list of competitors and the timetable of events, or to browse through the historical records which include chapters on every Olympic fixture since Stockholm in 1912 with a look back to the Ancient Olympic Games and the four editions of the Modern Olympics from which horsesport as we know it was missing? An extraordinary collection of photographs, features on a wide variety of relevant topics, details of rules, regulations and much, much more are all available on the FEI's fantastic new website

www.fei.org/olympics which is online now and the place to be as the spectacular sporting occasion draws ever closer.

And when the Games begin there will be LIVE online results for every competitor to keep you absolutely up-to-date and right on the edge of your seat all the way.

Let's take a quick canter around the site to give you a taste of what is already available and what is yet to come

HOME

The HOME page includes a list of the qualified National Federations and there is a drop-down menu of qualified competitors in each discipline. To print this you simply click on the pdf inside each discipline and voilà! - there is the long-list of riders with full details of all their horses. Also included on this page is a range of Olympic-related news stories and if you go "Through the Looking Glass" you will enter into a whole new universe of photographs including some from the official handover by the IOC to the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the 2007 Test Event in Hong Kong. As the Games begin, new photo galleries containing atmosphere pictures and views behind the scenes will be added daily.

This brings you to the photo pages and it is the historical pictures, dating all the way back to Stockholm in 1912 that are the real show-stealers. You could spend hours browsing through the spectacular collection that brings the whole Olympic story to life in a very real way. The posters for each Games are, in themselves, collectors items - full of colour and drama and quite unique.

THE OLYMPIC ALBUM

How about those lean, fit-looking horses on the gold medal winning Swedish Jumping and Eventing teams in 1912 when the host country also took individual gold in Dressage? And the wonderful window on the dress-style of the 1920's in the Antwerp collection which also includes the dashing Belgian boys who scooped the gold in Vaulting?

You feel as if you are looking down on the scene as the horses are unloaded from a ship at the Los Angeles Docks in 1932 - the year when Japanese baron Takeichi Nishi took individual gold in Jumping - and there is a surreal quality about the picture of Harry D. Chambelain and Pleasant Smiles on their way to securing Eventing team gold for the host country, while the elegant step of Xavier F Lesagne's Tains, winner of individual Dressage gold for France, is matched by the rider's seat....

Look at those enormous jodhpurs worn by Lis Hartle from Denmark as she took her silver medal in dressage in Helsinki in 1952! and the wonderful walk of André Jousseame's Harpagon who claimed individual dressage bronze for France that year. Prince Philip is pictured handing the Jumping gold medal to America's Bill Steinkraus in Mexico City in the 1968 collection which also includes a very youthful portrait of German dressage legend Reiner Klimke while by 1976 the big screen has become a reality - look at the number of spectators in that Montreal arena!

New Zealand's Eventing genius Mark Todd took his first Olympic gold with Charisma in 1984 and the picture of the tall Kiwi during the prize-giving ceremony has become something of a classic - isn't it amazing that this man, crowned the greatest rider of the 20th century by the FEI, has qualified for Hong Kong 24 years after this photo was taken? There is also a spectacular picture of Eventing bronze medallist Ginny Holgate (now Elliott) and the great Priceless who took bronze. Ginny will also be in Hong Kong 24 years later - but this time as team manager of the Irish Eventing squad.

Super-stars are the order of the day in the Seoul 1988 grouping which includes the jumping partnerships of Pierre Durand and Jappeloup from France and America's Greg Best with the extraordinary Gem Twist, a first glimpse of Germany's Ludger Beerbaum, another Eventing gold medal for Todd and Charisma and Germany's Monica Theoredscu and Ganimedes en route to Dressage team gold. The Barcelona 1992 pages are adorned with a beaming Ludger taking his first individual gold, the happy Dutch Jumping team claiming their first, and only, gold and a sensational shot of dressage gold medallist Nicole Uphoff and Rembrandt who pipped The Netherlands' Anky Van Grunsven and Bonfire, although Anky is on top next time around in Sydney where David O'Connor, now USEF President, claims Eventing gold. And then it's on to Athens with Anky still on a roll, great shots of reigning jumping champion Rodrigo Pessoa from Brazil with Baloubet du Rouet and team gold and individual silver medallist Chris Kappler and Royal Kalber for the USA. This is a treasure trove of great memories, and you should relish every minute of it....

NEWS

The news page already contains a number of articles already published and there will be plenty more added over the next few weeks.

DID YOU KNOW SECTION

DID YOU KNOW that the first woman to win an Olympic medal dates back to the ancient Olympic Games when in 396 B.C. and again in 392 B.C, the Spartan princess Cynisca, sister of Spartan king Agesilaus II, won the four-horse chariot race. And while it does, on one level, defy all the odds as women were not even allowed to compete in the Olympic events, it can be explained by the fact that it was the owners of the horses proclaimed winners of the event, and thus a female owner meant a female winner. When you consider that chariot racing was one of the most exciting and potentially fatal of events – and in particular for the winners the greatest honour – there must have been quite a stir when the loophole revealed a female winner...

DID YOU KNOW that a horse-walker was installed onto the ship that transported the US equine athletes to the Amsterdam Olympic Games in 1928? We might think we know all there is to know about fitness training these days, but such was the concern that the horses would arrive well-muscled and ready for action that the walker was used throughout the voyage and it worked a treat. AND, for even better measure, it was commandeered from the set of the 1925 silent blockbuster BEN HUR!

DID YOU KNOW that Great Britain's Marion Coakes was the first-ever woman to win an Olympic show jumping medal when taking individual silver in Mexico City in 1968?

HISTORY AND RESULTS

Still under construction, the historical records are almost completed and will be available within the next few days but already you can wander back through the Ancient Games and on through the period dating from 1896 to 1936.

Each Games since 1912 will be described in its own individual story and full results are available under the RESULTS heading which is accompanied by some useful statistics, facts and figures including the fact that dressage rider Reiner Klimke holds the record for winning most medals in the history of the Olympic Games with an amazing total of eight. He obviously also heads up the Dressage medal rankings while America's Mike Plumb holds the record for most Eventing medals with six and Germany's Hans Gunther Winkler has the record in Jumping with a total of seven.

REFERENCES

Under this heading you can explore the equestrian venues through maps, check out the information supplied to National Federations, read about the provisions for horse health and browse through the papers discussed at the Heat and Humidity Conference in Lausanne earlier this year. The qualification formula and the rules for the competitions are all here too and, to complete your extraordinarily extensive knowledge, you cannot be without the TIMETABLE of events, also available on the HOMEPAGE - an absolute MUST for everyone following these Games.

OFFICIALS AND ANTI-DOPING

On top of all the above there is a full list of officials with accompanying biographies - this page is worth perusing if only for the picture included. Is that REALLY dressage judges marking their sheets in those horse-carts? Is this a world away from the way we do things today? Well some judges of course might say "not at all"... but those were very definitely different times. Can you picture Mariette Withages and friends sitting up in one of these?

The important subject of anti-doping is explained in detail. There will be more tests and a tougher testing regime for all Olympic athletes while the horses will be screened as never before. The presence of one of the world's top equine laboratories on site will ensure that results can be achieved quickly and efficiently.

AND MORE

This is just a taste of what is in store on the website which, during the Games, will provide daily competition reports, pictures and news items along with the medal count and live feed of results. The site is designed to provide you with all you need to know about the Olympic Games past and present and to maximise your enjoyment and engagement with the 2008 edition in Hong Kong which will get underway in 21 days' time. Join us for the countdown in the lead-up period, and for all of the action during the event itself, at www.fei.org/olympics - we think you will enjoy the ride!

By Louise Parkes

Olympic Team Leader's Diary: 24th July 2008-07-24

24th July

Welcome to the first instalment of my Olympic and Paralympic diary which I hope that you will find an informative but also light hearted look at the journey of all our equestrian teams through the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I landed safely in Hong Kong yesterday together with my assistant Sophie George. We are the first of the Team GB Equestrian support team to arrive and our task over the next week is to make sure everything is 100% prepared when everyone else gets here.

We were met at the airport by the very helpful National Olympic Committee assistants – these are people allocated to each country to assist in a number of ways. This might be getting us from the airport to our hotels, providing local advice or assisting with translation, which I am sure will come in particularly useful!

Last night we met up with Martin Atock from Peden's who are in charge of organising the horse transport, not just for Britain but for all nations. We had some final details to agree on the flights for our horses but I'm now satisfied that everything is in place ready for when the dressage and eventers are the first to fly on the 30th July, from Stansted.

Today we made our first trip to the Olympic Village where we were the first people to arrive and were made to feel very welcome. We were allocated our rooms in the Village – some riders and staff will be staying in the village and others in hotels, depending on what is most suitable to their requirements. We also have an office in the Village that will double as a physio room due to space restrictions! We have been allocated 2 vehicles and there was certainly plenty of information on hand which Sophie and I will now need to digest.

We have been joined by Sarah Johns from the British Olympic Association (BOA) who has come over to Hong Kong to help us get set up and organised, I was grateful for this when the three pallets of kit arrived from B&Q to dress the athletes rooms both in the Village and in the hotel. We set to work unpacking this kit which includes pillow cases, throws (which look like blankets to me....), ironing boards, irons and much more, there are even pictures and flags to decorate the rooms and help them get into the patriotic feel – all with the Team GBR logo.

The Olympic village, has been converted from a hotel and there are rooms for a wide range of activities from meditation to video games (it looked a long way removed from space invaders to me though?!)

At the moment there are still a lot of security about doing all their final checks so moving through the hotel can be quite time consuming as you get stopped and searched a lot – perhaps I just look particularly suspicious?

Back at home the Dressage and Eventing horses have made it into Pre-Export Quarantine without a problem and are undergoing their final fine-tuning before they fly out here next week when we will be ready to receive them. The next job is to set up the stables and unpack all the kit that has arrived there so the horses can feel as welcome as the riders. We await the arrival of Brendan Murray one of our team farriers in the next couple of days to help with that. With 2 weeks to go until the opening ceremony we are right on track!

Will Connell

First Olympic Horses Arrive at Sha Tin 2008-07-28

The human and animal kingdoms may be enjoying a quiet summer / winter weekend, depending on the hemisphere, but it is a key one for the horses taking part in the equestrian events of the 2008 Olympic Games. Indeed, on Friday 25 July the first horses left from Europe (Amsterdam, NED) and the North American continent (Atlanta, USA) on three flights to Hong Kong.

All 33 horses - coming from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Korea, the Netherlands, and Switzerland - accompanied by 15 attendants arrived in fantastic form to begin their acclimatisation. All the horses behaved properly on the flights and travelled very well.

The disembarkation process of the horses, their attendants and the vast amount of equipment that was flown in ran extremely smoothly. The horses underwent preliminary tests

immediately upon arrival and were declared to be remarkably well. They were in the stables less than two hours after landing. So, while human passengers were still queuing to have their passports checked and collect their luggage, the horses were enjoying a good roll in the shavings.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club and FEI veterinary teams will continue to closely monitor the horses to ensure they remain healthy.

The horses will now undergo a ten-day Post-Arrival Isolation during which training is possible.

Two-hundred and nineteen horses will be flown to Hong Kong for the Olympic equestrian events over 13 days. The last ones are due to arrive on 6 August.

Royal Send off for Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Teams 2008-07-28

On Friday the 25th July HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, Patron of the British Equestrian Federation (BEF), attended a reception for the Olympic Dressage and Eventing teams, the Paralympic Dressage team, their team managers, coaches and team suppliers. The reception, held at Hartpury College in Gloucestershire, gave The Duchess the opportunity to give, personally, her best wishes to the riders before they depart for Hong Kong, where all the equestrian events will take place.

The Olympic teams are currently going through the process of the Pre-Export Quarantine; the Dressage team at Hartpury College; the Eventing team at the Unicorn Trust in Stow on the Wold and the Jumping team are utilising Towerlands in Essex. The Paralympic team will also use the Unicorn Trust for their Pre-Export Quarantine from the 18th August.

Pre-Export Quarantine is required for all Team horses travelling to the 2008 Games. It lasts for 7 days and each venue has been selected to meet the specific needs of each individual team, allowing them to fine-tune their horses prior to travelling to Hong Kong. Strict bio security measures are in place for the duration of the quarantine period.

During the reception The Duchess of Cornwall greeted the riders and wished them luck at the Games, she also met some of the support staff and team suppliers who were present to thank them for the valuable contribution that they have made to prepare all the teams for the Games.

The Show Jumping team were unfortunately not able to be present due to their hectic competition schedule and the event clashing with the Royal International Horse Show at Hickstead. This included the UK leg of the Samsung Super League where the British Team finished an impressive second.

Andrew Finding, Chief Executive of the BEF comments, "This was a valuable opportunity to gather some of the teams together prior to their departure for Hong Kong and focus on the task ahead. The team was delighted that our Patron, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, was able to join us and share her personal well wishes with the team. The Federation as a whole wishes the Olympic and Paralympic teams the very best of luck as they go off to Hong Kong knowing that they have had the very best of preparation. I would also like to thank all of the support staff, team suppliers and the all important owners who have done so much to get our Olympic and Paralympic campaign to this point."

Pre-Export Quarantine well underway for Olympic Teams 2008-07-29

The Dressage and Eventing horses are prepared and ready to leave for Hong Kong tomorrow following seven days in Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ). The Jumping horses are just embarking on the same process prior to their departure next Monday.

Quarantine is a requirement of the Hong Kong Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), our equivalent to DEFRA, who wish to limit as much as is possible the risk of disease to local horses from visitors. It also ensures all horses competing at the Games are vaccinated, tested and certified to an equivalent health status that will enable them to train and compete as one group whilst in Hong Kong.

The Dressage and Eventing horses have been in Quarantine since the 22nd July, the Dressage team at Hartpury college, Gloucestershire and the Eventers at the Unicorn Trust at Stow on the Wold. The Jumpers, whose competition is not until the second week of the Games, entered their PEQ on the 26th July at Towerlands, Essex and will fly on the 4th August.

Each venue has been selected specifically to meet the needs of each Team. Each site has been assessed by the Team Managers, Vets and World Class Staff prior to being inspected and approved by DEFRA who are working on behalf of the AFCD.

Prior to the arrival of the Teams, each premises was cleaned and disinfected, boundary fencing was erected and all of the supplies required by the Teams were put in place prior to "lock down". Before any horses entered PEQ each site was finally inspected by the Official Veterinarian.

Upon arrival each horse was checked by the Team Vet and Official Veterinarian. All equipment, including tack, was inspected for cleanliness prior to being admitted. Bedding, forage, new feed and water bowls and mucking out kit are all provided within the PEQ site. Once all the horses were settled the Team Managers briefed riders, grooms and support staff on the processes for the PEQ period.

During PEQ the Teams have been training as they normally would prior to a major Championship and taking the opportunity to fine tune their horses and get some last minute training sessions in. The teams have also had chance to focus on the challenge ahead and make use of facilities such as heat chambers to attempt to acclimatise ahead of travelling out to Hong Kong. The horses are being monitored on a daily basis with temperature, fluid and feed intake being recorded.

There are strict bio security rules which are essential to the ongoing success of PEQ, all personnel entering any of the PEQ sites do so via a single entry/exit point. At this point they are required to sign in and change into clean outer clothing and boots or overalls for visitors. Hands are washed prior to entering into the "clean" zone. PEQ is left via the changing area to change back into non-PEQ clothes and sign out. All Riders kit and equipment had to be inside PEQ before the site was locked down as they cannot bring anything else in after that point.

Disinfectant mats are at the entry to the clean zone and additional hand cleansing points are sited around the site.

The Quarantine period ends for the Eventers and Dressage teams tomorrow when their horses will be transported to Stansted airport in clean and disinfected lorries and transferred

onto the plane for their journey to Hong Kong. The Jumpers will go through the same process next week.

Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Handbook now available on-line **2008-08-05**

The official handbook for the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Teams is now available to download online.

Including information on all the horses, riders and support staff plus past results and information on the format of the events, this is an invaluable guide to anyone wishing to follow our equestrian teams as they compete in Hong Kong.

Download the guide from the Equestrian Team GBR media centre which can be accessed directly [here](#).

Spotlight On: Dr Sally Nicholson **2008-08-05**

Background

Dr Sally Nicholson always wanted to find a way to combine her love of horses and her medical work - now she has fulfilled her dream by working as the Para-Equestrian Dressage Team Doctor going to the Hong Kong Paralympic Games in September.

Sally's love of horses started from a young age. She regularly competed at Eventing, which she continued throughout her studies and while she was at Leeds University. After qualifying as a doctor in 2002 after studying for six years, she trained as a surgeon for three years, before transferring to general practice. She was delighted when she became a Medical Officer at the Bramham International Horse Trials and Allerton Park, which were perfect opportunities to combine her two passions.

Despite now working in Altrincham as a GP, Sally loved working in the equestrian field so much that she approached Dr Peter Whitehead - Team Doctor for the British Equestrian Olympic Team - to find out about other opportunities to work with horses, so she shadowed him before taking up her current role with the Para-equestrian team.

Her role

In the lead up to leaving for Hong Kong, Sally has been working closely with the seven riders selected for the team to identify any immediate or acute problems that may need physiotherapy and confirming their medical histories. It's not only the health of the riders that Sally focuses on - the pastoral care is just as important.

"We need to ensure the riders are emotionally fit, as well as physically, as the distance from friends and family can be hard for some athletes and could affect their performance - this is why the medical team provides emotional support for not only the squad, but also the support staff, to help ensure they all remain happy and enjoy the experience of the Games."

Sally stays in touch with the physiotherapy staff, so she is able to swap notes on the health of the riders, following any treatment. Similarly, she has had to predict which medication to take with her - from simple cough and cold remedies to dealing with more specific

treatments, like skin problems, that might arise from the humid conditions combined with splints on the limbs of riders; this might include skin infection or pressure sores.

Sally has worked with her colleagues to put heat and hydration plans into action with the riders preparing to cope with the difference in temperature and weather, as well as gaining advice from the experts in Hong Kong, who are used to the weather.

She has also worked with the medical team to prepare for any medical crisis, as much as they can, as you can never predict what may occur at any event, especially ones as large as the World stage!

Sally said: "My main job is to ensure everyone stays safe and healthy and do all I can for the team. It's my first time at the Paralympics, and it will be great to see all of the hard work and preparation finally pay off - I just can't wait to go now!"

TV Schedule now Online 2008-08-06

The BBC have now released a detailed TV schedule for the duration of the Olympic Games. This year will be the BBC's biggest Olympic operation, bringing more action from the Games than ever before.

BBC1 and BBC2 will be bringing over 300 hours of coverage including live action and regular round-up programmes covering the best of the action.

This year the Olympics will be the biggest interactive operation to date with live action and dedicated sport by sport coverage, plus sport specific highlights programmes available via the red button and the BBC website. Freeview viewers will be able to access 3 streaming channels and viewers with access to Satellite or Cable will get an extra 3 interactive channels.

Luckily for Equestrian fans, most of the dedicated red button coverage is available via the Freeview channels apart a couple of sessions. All channels can be accessed online.

For the full timetable visit the BBC online schedule here, including a handy drop down list so you can access a detailed timetable of the next few days of equestrian coverage. We have also produced a timetable of the dedicated equestrian coverage available on BBCi which you can download here. Don't forget that this doesn't include all the regular news and round ups on the main BBC channels which may also include some equestrian coverage.

Quick Links

- [BBC online schedule](#)
- [Timetable of dedicated Equestrian Coverage on BBCi](#)

Eventers Get First Look at Challenging Course 2008-08-07

Team GB's eventers today (Thursday) had their first sight of the cross-country course they will tackle at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

The five-strong team had the opportunity to look at the Beas River course in Hong Kong, which is hosting the equestrian events at the Beijing 2008 Games.

The 4,560m course, which features 39 jumping efforts, was designed by Britain's Mike Etherington-Smith. Riders will have an optimum time target of eight minutes to complete the course.

Team GB's Daisy Dick, who rides Spring Along at the Games, said: "I feel it's a really strong track and time will be a major issue with all the twists and turns.

"It will be impossible to get the horses into a good rhythm as you are always on a turn and there isn't anywhere for a good gallop to make up any lost time. Overall, I'm happy it will suit my horse as he's quick."

Tina Cook, who rides Miners Frolic, said: "It's a clever and beautifully built course and this certainly won't be a dressage competition. The going seems fine even with all the rain we've had.

"There are a number of fences where I'm undecided on the route as it's my first walk. Although Miners Frolic is a big galloping horse, he's very obedient and not at all strong so he should cope well."

William Fox-Pitt, who rides Parkmore Ed, said: "The track is tight and busy with questions coming thick and fast all the way round.

"It is hard to pick out one problem fence as there are a few on first glance. When you ride at Badminton or Burghley, to win it is usually a case of straight route or nothing; here that's not the case as there are a number of routes through fences. I'm not sure if that's a good thing – the quick route here is definitely on but there will always be a bit of doubt knowing there is another way. The fences are not as big and bold as a traditional four star course but the questions asked are every bit four star."

Mary King, who rides Call Again Cavalier at her fifth Olympic Games, said: "This is a true Olympic track – fantastically built and designed. The time will be difficult to get but that is what we wanted. Questions start early as there is a difficult first water at the fifth. It will certainly sort the men from the boys!"

Sharon Hunt, who rides Tankers Town, said: "Big and bold – should be good. There are plenty of angles and different routes so time will be important. I think it will take a good few walks to help me decide my routes at the combination fences but I'm really looking forward to it."

Spotlight On - Dr Peter Whitehead

2008-08-07

Background

Looking after the medical needs of some 70 people during the Olympic and Paralympic Games could be daunting for some people, but for the Team GBR doctor, it's all in a day's work.

Dr Peter Whitehead has an extensive equestrian background, both as a horse breeder, but also in his previous role as the Chief Medical Officer for British Eventing. With a Masters degree in Sports Medicine and being a full time GP, it seems Peter is certainly up to the challenge of managing the medical expertise of his team.

His role

During the Games, Peter has the overall responsibility of the health of riders and back room staff and coordinating the medical team, as part of his role as Director of Sports Science and Medicine (human) for the British Equestrian Federation's World Class Programme and team doctor for the British Equestrian Olympic Team.

Peter has ensured the riders are fit by putting them on a new fitness programme, which biologically is similar to the effects acclimatisation has on the body - the fitter the rider means their pulse rate lowers, which makes them sweat more and therefore cools the body.

The pastoral care of the team is also another priority for Peter and his team, as competing at an international level can be stressful and being away from family and friends can also have an impact - developing good relationships between the riders and medical team is therefore imperative.

Peter has also interviewed each rider to check their medication and medical history - therefore preparing for the unexpected with each rider, as each is a unique and individual case and could face different problems. Working with the riders who suffer from Asthma is another key area for Peter to focus on, by carrying out respiratory tests and monitoring any problems.

In order to be prepared for any medical situation, from minor headaches to serious injuries, Peter will be taking a vast array of ailments and medication, so to be able to deal with any condition quickly and enable the rider to get back to full health as soon as possible.

Throughout the Games, Peter will be on call 24 hours a day, so he is able to deal with any queries or medical emergencies at any time.

"For me, a successful Games is if we don't have to treat any serious injuries and come away with more than our predicted total of medals", said Peter. "I'm sure our preparations will certainly pay off from everyone's perspective on Team GBR and put us in good stead for a triumphant Games!"

Olympic Eventers over first hurdle

2008-08-08

The first challenge of the Olympic eventing competition got underway today with the first horse inspection. Despite one nerve-wracking moment for William Fox-Pitt and Parkmore Ed all the British Horses have passed and the riders are eager to get going tomorrow when their competition kicks off with the first day of dressage.

As in all eventing competitions, every horse must be trotted in front of the official ground jury to prove that they are fit enough to compete. This took place this afternoon in Hong Kong.

There was one nerve-wracking moment for William Fox-Pitt when Parkmore Ed was called to the holding box. A long conversation ensued between William, Jenny Hall (the Team Vet) and Yogi Breisner (the Team Manager) with the ground jury. They had noticed a very small swelling on the horse's tummy which started a few days ago but which has not interfered in the horses training, performance or well being in any way.

On closer inspection of the swelling, the ground jury did not ask to see the horse trot up again and declared the horse fit to compete. The words "Parkmore Ed accepted" were very gladly received by the British contingent in Hong Kong.

Tina Cook and Miners Frolic performed one of their best dressage tests to score 40.20 in the second session of the Olympic Eventing Dressage Competition today.

This leaves Tina in 8th position as the competition moves into the final session tomorrow morning, when 2 more riders from Britain are still to go – five times Olympian Mary King and Olympic debutant Sharon Hunt. William Fox-Pitt and Daisy Dick are in 21st and 23rd places respectively overnight.

Tina was clearly delighted with the lovely test Miners Frolic performed where he scored consistent 7s and 8s throughout. A jubilant Tracie Robinson, the team dressage trainer, greeted Tina as she left the arena telling her she was, “absolutely thrilled”.

Tina Comments, “I’m really pleased with him. He’s only ten and this is his biggest competition to date yet he’s done his best test ever. He was terrified of the camera at the top end but luckily he’s the sort of horse you can allow to look and then he accepts it. I’m just thrilled he allowed me to ride him in there. I was welling up when I came up – it’s a Gifford trait! My horse, Miners Frolic has a super brain for a thoroughbred and I knew he’d cope with everything and show himself. I’ve waited 20 years for this and now I’m here.”

This session completed the first day of dressage in Hong Kong and leaves Great Britain lying in 5th place overnight with the Australian’s still in the lead, followed by America. However, there are 2 more riders still to do their dressage for Great Britain and there is an overwhelming feeling that the challenging cross-country course will mean that this will not be a dressage competition. It is definitely still all to play for.

Solid start for Eventing Team

2008-08-09

The eventing competition started in Hong Kong with an early morning session today, seeing 2 out of the 5 British riders tackle the dressage phase. Team GB are currently lying in 6th position but there are 2 more sessions to go yet.

Daisy Dick and Spring Along were the first to go and made a solid start for the British Team with a score of 51.7. Spring Along warmed up well and Daisy said; "Outside I was thinking 30's as he was that soft and beautiful."

But the horse has a reputation for being a bit unpredictable on the big stage and he was a bit spooky. "It was a big atmosphere for someone so small and brown!" Daisy said.

Much of his work was impressive, scoring sevens and eights - especially for the shoulder-in and half pass in trot but the overall score was let down by a few lapses in concentration. When asked was she affected by the heat during her test, she said; "You don't notice it when you are in the test but I got off and just broke out in sweat. Another ten degrees warmer and maybe he wouldn't have been so spooky! He (Spring Along) was naughty for his test in Aachen and then I had the best cross country ride of my life so let's hope here will be the same."

Britain's second rider William Fox-Pitt was also a victim of competition jitters when Parkmore Ed took exception to the top end of the arena on entry. "He was hit by the atmosphere and suddenly felt very isolated and wanted to head back to the entry. Outside he was super so I'm obviously disappointed as I know he is capable of better."

Like his compatriot Daisy Dick, William kept his cool and went on to produce some good movements which scored well. "Ed has been a bit lit up since he arrived and with quarantine and over a week here, it's been a while since he's done something so exciting!"

After the first morning of dressage, the leader board is dominated by one name – Fredericks. Australia's married duo of Clayton and Lucinda hold first and second; Lucinda is leading with her Badminton and Burghley winner Headley Britannia on 30.4 – whose test included a perfect 10 for a flying change – while husband Clayton is 6.6 penalties behind on 37.0 with Ben Along Time. The top three is completed by the USA's Gina Miles and McKinlaigh on the only other sub-40 score, 39.3.

William is currently 11th on 50.2 and Daisy just two places behind in 13th. Dressage resumes at 7:15pm Hong Kong (12.15pm UK time) time where we will see Britain's Tine Cook in action at approximately 2.54pm UK time.

Mary and Sharon Keep Britain in touch of Leaders **2008-08-10**

The British Camp is a happy place to be after Sharon Hunt and Mary King shone in the final dressage session this morning. First to go, Sharon Hunt with Tankers Town produced a soft and supple performance for a score of 43.5; good enough for 13th position over all while team "veteran" Mary King, enjoying her fifth Olympic Games, broke the 40 penalty barrier with 38.1 to lie ninth ahead of tomorrow's all-important cross country phase.

Sharon was delighted with Tankers Town and is enjoying her Olympic experience so far, "Tankers Town felt really bright - he didn't spook at the flower pots but was definitely aware of the large Olympic flame! He wasn't as relaxed as I'd have liked so I could have ridden him more. The whole Olympic experience is brilliant and I'm really enjoying it. William (Fox-Pitt) and Mary (King) have been really helpful, especially when walking the cross country course - we've found places to shave vital seconds off so watch me tomorrow - I should be going like a good 'un!"

These two scores have lifted Britain one place overall in the team standings to fourth. The Australians hold on to their lead with a three rider total of 102.8 while Germany is just a few penalties astray on 110.5 and the USA finish on 115.6. Our score of 121.8 puts the team 19 penalties behind the leaders but the riders' comments on Mike Etherington-Smith's course indicate that time is going to be a factor owing to the tricky terrain and intense jumping effort.

Team Manager Yogi Breisner commented; "It is for the others to loose and us to win."

Mary King was more than happy with her performance today; "Call Again Cavalier was very settled within himself today – in fact he has been really settled and relaxed since he arrived. One of my movements, the first flying change, wasn't as good as I'd have liked but we both find them difficult. My others scored sevens and eights so really delighted with those."

When asked about tomorrow's cross country test, Mary replied; " I've walked it three times now and it certainly feels shorter! The first time it felt like it went on for ages but now the distance seems manageable in my mind but the intensity level is no less. I am very happy to go late on as I can watch how the course is riding but of course it gives you more time to get nervous!"

The question of her fifth Olympics was brought up and if she still enjoyed the sport; "Gosh yeah!" Mary exclaimed. "I really enjoy it – in fact I love it. It is pointless if you dread what

your are doing and I can't wait for tomorrow. I have great confidence in my horse and if I ride well, he can do anything. It is all down to me now."

Individual Top Five

1. Lucinda Fredericks Headley Britannia AUS 30.4
2. Karin Donkers Gazelle De La Brasserie BEL 31.7
3. Ingrid Klimke Abraxxas GER 33.5
4. Megan Jones Irish Jester AUS 35.4
5. Rebecca Holder Courageous Comet USA 35.7

British Placings

9. Mary King Call Again Cavalier 38.1
13. Kristina Cook Miners Frolic 40.2
18. Sharon Hunt Tankers Town 43.5
34. William Fox-Pitt Parkmore Ed 50.2
37. Daisy Dick Spring Along 51.7

Team Top Five

1. AUSTRALIA 102.8
2. GERMANY 110.5
3. UNITED STATES 115.6
4. GREAT BRITAIN 121.8
5. ITALY 127.4

Great Britain in Third ahead of Final Day 2008-08-11

Great Britain had a good day in the Cross-country phase of the eventing competition today to leave them in bronze medal position ahead of tomorrow's Show Jumping. Mary King and Tina Cook are both in the top ten where the scores are tight, promising an exciting final day tomorrow.

Daisy Dick lived up to her reputation as a brilliant path-finder as the first Britain to go in the cross-country phase this morning. She picked up 17.2 time faults to put her on a score of 68.9, the time was proving very challenging and this remained up there with some of the quickest times of the day.

Daisy was delighted commenting, "I had a peach of a ride." She produced a textbook round apart from one slightly difficult moment towards the end of the course when it looked like she might have a run out, "it was all going a bit too perfectly up to that point so I thought I had better give everyone a nervous moment."

Daisy's feedback to the team was important to the 4 British competitors still to go, "I probably could have gone faster but it is very 'skidy' out there and I didn't want to risk a fall on the flat."

Referring to her horse Spring Along as, "Mr SAS," she was ecstatic with his performance, "he's a unique horse in so many ways and any problems we do have, it's usually my fault!"

William built on Daisy's performance by posting the second fastest time of the day, picking up just 10 penalties to put him onto a score of 60.20 at this stage.

William commented, "That's as tough as eventing gets, I was puffed and I've been putting in a lot of fitness work. The questions come thick and fast but I had an enjoyable ride where I managed to get into a good rhythm - Ed has a long stride which worked to our advantage. You have to make a decision at every single fence but I trusted him to jump, he was fabulous and finished really well, he's a super horse."

With Tina Cook next to go William was keen to share some last minute advice with her before she headed off on the course. It must have worked because Tina continued to build on Britain's good fortunes with another round picking up the same time faults as Daisy which gives her a score of 57.4.

Tina was absolutely delighted with her young horse Miners Frolic who at just 10 years old is the youngest horse in the British Team, "he was very confident, focused and so willing to please. He took on every fence and didn't look at anything. He felt very grown up and really wanted to please me so the pressure was on me to get it right. He's the best horse I've ever had as he's great in all 3 phases, I've planned his career carefully with the aim of getting him to the Olympics and bringing him here full of confidence."

Next to go, Sharon Hunt started well but picked up a refusal late on in the course plus time faults to finish on a score of 91.10.

Sharon was disappointed but philosophical about her round, "I had to have a crack at getting close to the time, I'd have kicked myself if I'd gone clear but with a lot of time penalties and would always have wondered if I could have gone faster. I realised, watching some of the other horses, that he would probably tire and he did but he was brilliant and tried really hard."

Sharon had a run out at fence 27/28 which has caused problems for several in the field, she commented, "many riders have made that fence look easy but believe me its very difficult."

Sharon Hunt & Tankers Town

By the time Mary King got out on the course the rain was falling hard and she had the worst conditions of the day to contend with. This didn't stop her putting in a great round to finish in joint 5th on a score of 56.10.

Mary commented, "I went as quickly as I could! My horse is a relentless galloper but hasn't got the wizzy gallop of a thoroughbred . I kept to tight lines wherever I saw an opportunity and cut inside everyone else's hoofprints. My only sticky moment was at the second last but I wasn't going to let him run out. I was very emotional at the end and just looked to the sky and thought 'aren't I lucky to be doing this.' Call Again Cavalier is a great jumper and whatever happens tomorrow, the best horse will win."

This puts the team in bronze medal position ahead of the Show Jumping tomorrow, with less than 8 penalties separating the top ten and not too much to choose between the top teams it is still all to play for in the final phase.

Individual Scores

- 1st – Hinrich Romeike & Marius (GER) – 50.2
- 2nd – Ingrid Klimke & Abraxxas (GER) – 50.7
- 3rd – Megan Jones & Irish Jester (AUS) – 51.0
- 4th – Clayton Fredericks & Ben Along Time (AUS) – 53.4
- = 5th – Gina Miles & Mckinlaigh (USA) – 56.1
- = 5th – Mary King & Call Again Cavalier (GBR) – 56.1

7th Didier Dhennin & Ismene du Temple (FRA) – 56.8
8th – Andreas Dibowski & Butts Leon (GER) - 57.3
9th – Karin Donckers & Gazelle de la Brasserie – 57.3
10th – Tina Cook & Miners Frolic – 57.4

British Scores

14th – William Fox-Pitt & Parkmore Ed – 60.2
23rd – Daisy Dick & Spring Along – 68.9
38th – Sharon Hunt & Tankers Town – 91.1

Team Scores

1st – Germany – 158.1
2nd – Australia – 162.0
3rd – Great Britain – 173.7
4th – Italy – 198.4
5th Sweden – 200
6th – New Zealand – 230.9
Bronze for Tina Cook

2008-08-12The individual eventing competition reached a nail biting climax in Hong Kong this evening but saw Britain's Tina Cook keep her cool and take the bronze medal.

Tina went into the final round in joint sixth position but it was still all to play for with less than a fence between her and the leaders. Her young horse Miners Frolic jumped an immaculate clear round to really put the pressure on those above her. Only two more riders were able to emulate Tina's clear round, leaving her in third place.

A very emotional Tina Cook commented, "He was super and really deserved a medal, he was fantastic! When it gets to that stage it's all about mind over matter, he's an amazing horse and has been fantastic in all three stages."

The gold went to Germany's Hinrich Romeike and the silver to America's Gina Miles.

Final Scores

Gold – Hinrich Romeike & Marius – 54.2
Silver – Gina Miles & McKinlaigh – 56.1
Bronze – Tina Cook & Miners Frolic – 57.4

British Final Scores

11th – Mary King & Call Again Cavalier – 68.1
12th – William Fox-Pitt & Parkmore Ed – 68.2
28th Daisy Dick & Spring Along – 79.9
34th – Sharon Hunt & Tankers Town – 95.1

Great Britain take Bronze in Eventing

2008-08-12Great Britain held onto the bronze medal position in the eventing competition this evening in Hong Kong. The whole team jumped well in the final phase to cement their position, with a brilliant clear round from Tina Cook keeping her well in contention for an individual medal.

The Eventing Team Celebrate their Bronze Medal

The Australian and German teams both put in strong jumping performances and battled to the wire with the German team eventually taking the coveted team Gold.

The top 25 riders now jump again over a different course, which is both higher and shorter, to decide the individual medals. With Tina Cook in joint 6th place going into that final round, she is still in contention for an individual medal.

Sharon Hunt got things underway for the British this afternoon and although she had a fence down leaving her out of the final individual round she was still pleased with her Olympic performance, "He felt really great and kept going forwards throughout the round. He is really capable and careful, sadly this is the first fence he's had down in ages. He's been a real superstar all week and I've enjoyed every minute of my Olympic experience."

Daisy Dick was next to go and didn't have the best round lowering 2 fences and picking up 3 time faults, she said, "the atmosphere really got to him which is very disappointing because he is usually so reliable. I blame myself for the three time faults but he wasn't very relaxed and was full of tension."

With the three best scores still to go the bronze medal was still very much in Britain's sights and with just one fence down William Fox-Pitt helped the team on their way to that medal. He commented, "It was a difficult course tonight with tight turns. It was big enough but it rode really nicely with the horses jumping well and I was pleased with him tonight because he has been anxious under the lights. My week has been full of 'if onlys' and 'maybes' but that's the sport. Yesterday couldn't have gone better, he was remarkable."

He was delighted with a team medal, "It turned out fantastically well, not short of a miracle and we are very proud of our bronze."

Tina Cook put in the best round of the day for the British with a confident clear, "I'm so excited I can't breathe! For a young horse he coped brilliantly with the atmosphere. He was careful and listened to me even though he has never seen anything like this. I know he's a careful jumper and I'd be disappointed with anything less."

Upon securing the bronze she added, "We are so pleased, we were beaten fair and square but the whole team put up some brilliant performances."

Mary King was the last of the British riders to go and had an unusual 2 fences down but this did not affect the team bronze medal position. She commented, "I'm very disappointed, he was jumping beautifully but didn't have quite enough power in the final line. It's uncharacteristic for him – its been 2 years since he had a fence down at a major competition. But it is wonderful to bring home a medal especially when we didn't have the best of starts; I'm just going to have go on for another four years to get that elusive gold!"

The whole team were delighted not only with their bronze but also with the opportunity that now faces Tina in the individual competition which begins later on this evening in Hong Kong.

Final Team Scores

Gold – Germany – 169.7

Silver – Australia – 171.2

Bronze - Great Britain – 185.7

Michael Whitaker's Horse Withdrawn 2008-08-13

The British Olympic Association (BOA) and the British Olympic Equestrian Team have decided to withdraw horse number 329 PORTOFINO 63, ridden by Michael Whitaker, from

the Show Jumping competition due to lameness. The team veterinarian has carried out an extensive investigation but as yet has been unable to target the source of the problem.

Portofino 63, a 16.3hh 14 year old bay mare owned by Gillespie Equestrian, was sound during pre-export quarantine in the UK and on arrival in Hong Kong but has developed a problem in the last 48 hours. It has been decided in the horse's best interests to withdraw her before the Horse Inspection, which takes place tomorrow morning.

The reserve horse, Russel, ridden by Nick Skelton, now comes into the squad of four. Owned by Lisa Hales, Russel is a 16.2hh Grey Stallion.

Jumping Horses all Pass Inspection 2008-08-14

All of Great Britain's show jumping horses have passed the horse inspection in Hong Kong today. Their competition begins tomorrow when the first qualifier, counting towards qualification to the individual final and decides the jumping order for the Team competition gets underway.

The British squad have been drawn sixth to go and will jump in the following order:

- Nick Skelton with Lisa Hales' Russel
- Tim Stockdale with John Boshers' Corlato
- Ben Maher with Daniel Paul's Rolette
- John Whitaker with Rebecca Stones' Peppermill

The competition will take place at the impressive Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue in Sha Tin, seventy-nine horses and riders from twenty-nine nations will contest this year's Olympic competitions.

The first qualifying competition will take place on Friday 15th August 2008 where all seventy-nine riders complete one round, not against the clock and with no jump off. Those competitors with the same number of faults are placed equal. The competition counts for qualification to the individual final and decides the jumping order for the team competition held on the 17/18 August.

The British Team arrived safely in Hong Kong last week and has spent the last few days acclimatising themselves to the heat and humidity and the unpredictable weather conditions that has hit Sha Tin in the last week or so. The British contingent for this year's Olympic Games can only be described as a mixture of experience and youth. Two members will be making their Olympic debut; twenty-five year-old Ben Maher from Bishops Stortford in Hertfordshire is the youngest member of an Olympic show jumping team for some years. Ben's Olympic partner is Daniel Paul's ten year-old bay mare Rolette. Ben and Rolette have had many successes on the International stage over the past twelve months, including wins in the Mechelen and Maastricht Grand Prix's. Tim Stockdale, 44, from Roade in Northampton will also make his Olympic debut, for which he has worked for many years. Tim will ride John Boshers' stunning eleven year-old grey mare Corlato, who made a remarkable recovery from a serious fall in Lisbon two years ago to become a key player in the British Team in recent months.

For John Whitaker, 54, from Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, this will be his fifth Olympic Games and he also claims the title of the oldest member of Team GB competing at this year's Games! John partnered the famous Ryan's Son to an Olympic Team Silver Medal in Los Angeles in 1984. This year John will ride Rebecca Stones' eleven year-old bay stallion,

Peppermill. Together John and Peppermill were the linchpin of the British Team who secured not only the Bronze medal at last year's European Championships in Mannheim, Britain's first show jumping medal for nine years, but also Great Britain's place in the Hong Kong Games this summer.

Nick Skelton, 51, from Claverdon in Warwickshire travelled to the Games as Team reserve but following the withdrawal of Michael Whitaker and Portofino 63 now finds himself in the squad of four striving for a medal. Nick, another one with extensive Olympic experience having ridden at four Olympic Games prior to Hong Kong, will partner Lisa Hales' thirteen year-old grey stallion Russel. In 2001 Nick broke his neck in a horrific riding accident and was advised not to ride again. However, defying all the odds he returned to the saddle in 2002 and rode Arko III into tenth place at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

You can follow the show jumping action from Hong Kong thanks to comprehensive coverage on BBCi, schedule as follows*:

Friday 15th August

Coverage of the first individual jumping qualifier
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 14.15 – 18.00 hrs

Sunday 17th August

LIVE coverage of the first round of the Team Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 12.15 – 15.45 hrs

HIGHLIGHTS of the first round of the Team Final
BBCi – Satellite/Cable 4 18.00 – 19.30 hrs

Monday 18th August

LIVE coverage of the final round of the Team Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 12.15 – 15.15 hrs

HIGHLIGHTS of the final round of the Team Final
BBCi – Satellite/Cable 3 22.00 – 23.30 hrs

Thursday 21st August

LIVE coverage of the first round of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 12.15 – 14.00 hrs

LIVE Coverage of the second round of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 15.00 – 16.45 hrs

HIGHLIGHTS of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 20.45 – 10.15 hrs

* This timetable only shows the dedicated Equestrian coverage on BBCi. There is also further live coverage from the 2008 Games on BBC1, BBC2 & BBC3 which may include some coverage of equestrian sport. Please consult the main TV Guide on the BBC website for up to date information: www.bbc.co.uk/olympics

**Britain Qualify Two Riders for Individual Dressage Final
2008-08-14**

The British Dressage Team finished today's final team competition in 6th place and although this leaves them outside of the medal standings 2 British riders, Emma Hindle and Laura Bechtolsheimer have qualified for the individual final which begins on Saturday.

In today's competition, the final rider for the British team, Laura Bechtolsheimer scored 65.91% to leave Britain on a final score of 66.80%.

In the electric atmosphere Laura's test showed glimpses of the excellent form they are both capable of, scoring 9's for the first extended trot work. However, an error of course early on unsettled them both and Mistral Hojris seemed to become more powerful and extravagant as the test went on with Laura demonstrating great presence to contain him.

She was disappointed with the test, commenting, "It was on the borderline of what we could achieve. It's a fine line between what I can manage and brilliance. Sometimes it's very hard to get the right amount and he can be so big and extravagant. My lack of experience at this level showed but I had to go for it."

However, Laura's Games is not over yet as the score was good enough to qualify her for the individual final where the qualifying score will not be counted as part of the final mark .

Also, making the individual final is Britain's Emma Hindle who rode the test of her life to qualify in an impressive 4th place with a score of 71.12%.

Germany and Holland were hotly tipped to fight it out for the top two places in the team competition and Germany were the eventual victors with Holland taking silver and Denmark taking the bronze.

Final Team scores

Gold – Germany – 72.96%
Silver – Netherlands – 71.75%
Bronze – Denmark – 68.87%
4th – USA – 67.81%
5th – Sweden – 67.34%
6th – Great Britain – 66.80%

Show Jumpers make positive start 2008-08-15

The first of the individual show jumping competitions at the 2008 Olympic Games got underway today.

On a typically hot and humid evening in Hong Kong, the Olympic Equestrian Venue in Sha Tin was packed with spectators. From a field of seventy-seven horses and riders, the testing but fair course produced thirteen clear rounds. Great Britain made a solid start in their quest for Olympic success, putting in consistent performances to see all four team members finish in the top half of the starting field.

Nick Skelton making his fifth Olympic appearance riding Lisa Hales' Russel left all of the fences standing but crossed the finishing line with just a single time penalty. They currently hold equal fourteenth place. Speaking after his round Nick said:

"That's the easy bit done. I thought it might tire him out - it certainly did me! Russel is either good or bad, nothing in between and tonight, he was good. If he is well behaved there is nothing he can't jump and we're well capable of winning a medal if this continues. "

Olympic debutantes Tim Stockdale and John Boshers Corlato were extremely unlucky to lower the front rail of the final oxer to finish with just four faults. They currently lie in equal thirtieth position. Tim said:

"Corlato jumped well tonight - she was puffing a bit when we finished like she knew she'd done some work. I rode badly down the last line so the fence down is my fault, I was just trying too hard. The course we had tonight is better than we all thought it might be but we were using this to get used to the conditions and obviously secure qualification for the individual competition but this is not our most important round this week."

Fellow Olympic rookies Ben Maher and Daniel Paul's Rolette emulated Nick's performance to finish with zero jumping penalties but clocking up just a single time fault and currently shares equal fourteenth place. Ben commented:

"That's one round out of the way! Rolette warmed up well outside and was jumping huge and in the ring she was really good - almost 'too good'. Just that little bit "looky" but in a nice way. She's an unbelievable horse and I wouldn't swap her for any other around - her best years are certainly to come. I knew I had plenty in the tank so I'm not concerned about the time fault."

Olympic veteran John Whitaker, also making his fifth Olympic appearance with Rebecca Stones' Peppermill lowered just one fence for four jumping penalties plus a single time fault to finish with a total of five. They are currently in equal thirty-ninth place.

The first round of the Team Competition will take place on Sunday 17th August. The top ten teams will then go through to the second and final round to decide the Team medals on Monday 18th August.

Hindle Through to Final Round 2008-08-16

Britain's Emma Hindle has made it through to the last 15 in the Dressage competition, finishing in 9th place in today's Grand Prix Special on a score of 70.44%.

The Dressage Individual final is ridden in two rounds with 25 contesting the Grand Prix Special and the top 15 then going forward for the Freestyle competition, which takes place on Tuesday in Hong Kong. Scores from both rounds are combined to decide the individual medals.

Two British riders qualified for the individual final with Laura Bechtolsheimer being drawn second to go. She produced a tidy, much more settled test, on the powerful gelding Mistral Hojris showing none of the nerves that had plagued them in the team test just two days before. Scoring 67.16% today put her in 18th place, just outside the cut for Tuesday's Freestyle final. Laura, aged just 23 and making her Olympic debut in Hong Kong, was satisfied with her performance today, and glad to put the disappointment of the team competition behind her, she commented,

"I'm very pleased with our performance but disappointed by the score. At other competitions he has put in a similar test and scored well into the 70's but this is the Olympics. I am

thrilled I managed to come back into the ring and pull off a solid performance and I'm very proud of my horse. I'm certainly much happier now!"

Emma Hindle, who finished 4th overall in the team competition to qualify for today's Grand Prix Special and was drawn third from last to perform her test. Although the stallion Lancel looked to be feeling the atmosphere a little more today, Emma rode a second exceptional test to score 70.44%, rewarding her with 9th place and a position in Tuesday's final round.

A delighted Emma commented, "I'm really really happy with him, all week I had been focusing on my Grand Prix preparation for the Team. I had a really positive feeling throughout the test and he just got better and better. My result is more than I ever dreamed of as we had our ups and downs this season. I'm really proud of the way he coped with the atmosphere and conditions and I have proved to myself I can do it when it really matters."

Despite an upset in the final piaffe Germany's Isabell Werth and Satchmo lead the field (76.41%) with Anky Van Grunsven and Salinero of the Netherlands in 2nd place on a score of 74.75 %.

Show Jumpers Hold Fourth Place

2008-08-17The first round of the show jumping team competition took place at the 2008 Olympic Games today.

Capacity crowds once again packed into the Olympic Equestrian venue in Sha Tin to witness some breathtaking performances. The colourful, technical course designed by Leopoldo Palacios and Steve Stephens produced just five clear rounds.

Team GB earlier announced the unfortunate withdrawal of John Whitaker and Rebecca Stones' Peppermill from the first round of the team competition. Peppermill was a little tight and stiff over his back this morning and has been closely monitored by the Team Veterinarians and Equine Physiotherapist throughout the day. Despite receiving all the treatment and possible care, the decision was taken that it would not be right to ask the horse to jump round a track of Olympic standards and for this reason Peppermill was withdrawn from today's round. This meant that all three remaining GB riders' scores would count towards the team's final tally. However, Nick, Tim and Ben remained firmly focussed on delivering the best possible result for Great Britain, and they did not disappoint.

Nick riding Lisa Hales' Russel finished with eight penalties, a disappointed Nick said:

"I shouldn't have had two down – I'm very annoyed. When I wanted him to run on, he held back and equally when I wanted him to shorten, he ran on for our two fences down. We'll have to wait and see what happens."

Nick Skelton & Russel in action in Friday's Qualifier

Tim with John Boshers' Corlato jumped a super round and was extremely unlucky to have the first part of the tricky combination down to finish with just four penalties. A delighted Tim commented:

"Very pleased with her, she felt really 'on it' - much crisper than the other night. The message came back to us that some of the fences were difficult to see under the lights, with the white screen and the flame as backgrounds. If there is a right type of mistake to make, I did it by jumping too high over the middle part of the combination. Tonight has gone well for me with no mistakes."

Tim Stockdale & Corlato in action in Friday's qualifier

Ben riding Daniel Paul's Rolette emulated Tim's score, having just four faults, again at the tricky combination, but this time lowering the middle element. Speaking after his round Ben said:

"The water was a big ask for her with her experience but I was thrilled with how she jumped it I was advised to come slowly into the combination which I did and wouldn't have ridden it any different. She knocked the first element which made her think about the second but we should have gone clear really"

Ben Maher & Rolette in action in Friday's qualifier

Today's performance leaves Great Britain sharing fourth place overnight with Canada on a total score of sixteen penalties. With just one fence separating the first four nations, they have everything to ride for in tomorrow's final round of the team competition when the medals will be decided. The teams going forward to tomorrow's final round are as follows:

- =1st Switzerland -12 penalties
- =1st United States of America -12 penalties
- 3rd Sweden - 13 penalties
- =4th Great Britain - 16 penalties
- =4th Canada - 16 penalties
- =6th The Netherlands -17 penalties
- =6th Norway - 17 penalties
- =8th Germany - 20 penalties
- =8th Australia - 20 penalties

Three GB Show Jumpers Qualify for Individual Final 2008-08-18

Following today's second and final round of the Team competition, Ben Maher, Tim Stockdale and Nick Skelton have all qualified for the individual show jumping final at the 2008 Olympic Games to be held in Hong Kong on Thursday.

Once again the enormous, technical course designed for today's competition asked many questions and produced just five clear rounds.

The Appeal Committee's decision not to allow John Whitaker and Rebecca Stones' Peppermill to start was met with great disappointment in the British camp, however determined not to let it dampen their spirits or their determination, the three British riders dug deep and remained focused on delivering top class performances.

Twenty-five year-old Ben Maher riding Daniel Paul's Rolette, at his first Olympic Games, jumped a breathtaking clear round, to qualify for Thursday's final in sixth place. Tim Stockdale with John Boshers' Corlato was extremely unlucky to have two fences down to finish with eight penalties, but secured their place in Thursday's final by finishing in equal eighteenth place. Nick Skelton riding Lisa Hales' Russel lowered three poles for twelve jumping penalties and also accrued a single time fault to finish on a total of thirteen. Nick and Russel finished in equal thirty first place.

Ben Maher speaking after his clear round said:

“She was perfect tonight; I don’t think I could have done any better. We all did our best but we were fighting against it from the start, I can’t be unhappy with how I went today at all and it has given me confidence ahead of Thursday’s final. She’s jumping better and better each day and if I ride her well we can be in the top end of the individual final”.

The team gold medal went to the United States of America following a thrilling jump off with Canada who had to settle for the silver. Norway took the bronze medal. Great Britain finished in seventh place.

Gold - United States of America

Silver - Canada

Bronze - Norway

4th - Switzerland

=5th - Germany

=5th - The Netherlands

7th - Great Britain

8th - Sweden

9th - Australia

The individual final takes place on Thursday 21st August 2008 and is held over two rounds. The top thirty-five riders following today’s final round of the Team competition will contest the first round with the top twenty going through to the final. The medals are decided by the best score combined from the two rounds.

Hindle Finishes 7th in Top Class Contest 2008-08-19

The grand prix freestyle competition provided a thrilling conclusion to the Olympic individual dressage competition today with fifteen of the sport’s top combinations locked head to head in this graceful battle. Team GB’s Emma Hindle finished in 7th place, one of the highest ever placings for a British rider in an Olympic Games.

Going into the competition in 9th position after the grand prix special test Hindle rode with flair and determination to produce a third outstanding performance on the 15 year old Hanoverian stallion Lancet. She was rewarded with a score of 74.25%, finishing on a combined percentage of 72.34%.

“I am very happy” Emma commented, “normally he gets a little tense in the kur as he gets distracted by the music but he really worked for me and did everything I asked – I can’t ask for anything more than that. I really enjoyed it but this wouldn’t be his speciality.”

Emma’s achievement is all the more remarkable because of the difficult preparation she has had in the run up to this year’s games: “6 weeks ago I had a major operation (to remove a tumour) and so to finish so high in the placings is extra special.” She went on to pay tribute to all the support staff who aided her rapid recovery and said, “I can’t believe how many people believed in me. The morale in the British Equestrian camp has been amazing; I’m used to being involved in rivalry but now I’m proud to be part of such a great team.”

The individual gold medal eventually went to the Netherland’s ‘queen of freestyle’ Anky van Grunsven and Salinero who finished on a score of 78.68%, stealing the lead from Germany’s Isabell Werth and Satchmo 76.65%.

GoLD: Anky Van Grunsven (NED) 78.68%

SILVER: Isabell Werth (GER) 76.65%
BRONZE: Heike Kemmer (GER) 74.45%
GB Show jumpers Go For Gold!

2008-08-20 The last of the equestrian competitions at the 2008 Olympic Games takes place tomorrow at the Olympic Equestrian Venue in Sha Tin, Hong Kong.

Three of Britain's show jumpers will be going for gold in tomorrow's individual final. Twenty five year old Ben Maher making his Olympic debut at the 2008 Games will ride Daniel Paul's bay mare Rolette. Ben and Rolette have so far made the Olympic courses look easy and have lowered just a single pole over the three rounds that have taken place at the Games so far. They left spectators watching Monday's final team round breathless when they produced one of the best clear rounds of the competition so far to qualify for tomorrow's final in sixth place.

Tim Stockdale, also making his first Olympic appearance will ride John Boshers' grey mare Corlato. Tim and Corlato finished in eighteenth place to qualify for the final on a total of sixteen penalties. Nick Skelton riding in his fifth Olympic Games will partner Lisa Hales' grey stallion Russel. Nick and Russel finished in thirty first place individually, booking their place in tomorrow's final, finishing with an overall total of twenty-two.

The individual final takes place on Thursday 21st August 2008 with the top thirty-five riders contesting the first round before being whittled down to twenty for the final. All riders will start tomorrow's competition on a zero score and the medals will be decided by the best score combined from the two rounds.

You can follow the action and progress of the GB show jumpers in tomorrow's final on BBCi:

Thursday 21st August

LIVE coverage of the first round of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 12.15 – 14.00 hrs

LIVE Coverage of the second round of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 15.00 – 16.45 hrs

HIGHLIGHTS of the Individual Final
BBCi Freeview 2 or Satellite/Cable 3 20.45 – 22.15 hrs

Mixed fortunes for Team GB Show Jumpers in individual final 2008-08-21

Great Britain experienced mixed fortunes in today's individual show jumping final at the 2008 Olympic Games in Hong Kong.

Team GB qualified three individuals for today's final, the last of the equestrian competitions at the Games. Nick Skelton riding Lisa Hales' Russel finished the first round on a total of twelve penalties, finishing in overall twenty-ninth place and missing out on the second and final round. Speaking after the first round, a disappointed Nick said:

"He shouldn't have had any of those down, he simply didn't try enough tonight. It was a nice course and it shouldn't have caused any trouble but he's not the easiest horse to ride as he doesn't listen very well and can be headstrong."

Tim Stockdale riding John Boshers Corlato produced a foot perfect clear round in the first round to finish in the top ten going forward to the second. Speaking after the first round Tim said:

"I'm absolutely delighted, she's been going well all week and the fences she had down are more than she's had all season. I was lucky at the last – I'll put it down to jockey nerves – it is the Olympics after all!"

Ben Maher riding Daniel Paul's Rolette emulated Tim's first round fortunes jumping yet another breathtaking clear to book their place in the second round. Ben speaking after his first round clear said:

"She's jumping as good as she needs to be and hopefully I'll be there or there about when it matters".

The second round however brought disappointment to the British camp when Tim and Corlato crossed the line with an uncharacteristic sixteen penalties to finish in sixteenth place. A disappointed Tim commented:

"Her preparation outside was very good and I thought a clear might be on the cards but once in the arena she was jumping high enough but not wide enough. That's the way it goes."

A delay to proceedings shortly before Ben's second round due to mishap with a water tray in the main competition arena temporarily interrupted his preparation, however finishing with an unexpected twenty penalties meant they had to settle for twentieth place overall. A reflective Ben said:

"In the first round she was fantastic – as good as any night so far and I felt confident warming up. But I felt I had to carry her a little. She has a big heart but one fence down and she gave up on me. She wasn't the same horse and was running on empty. I came here thinking I could win but it as not meant to be. This was my first Olympic Games and I have had a great time here in Hong Kong, it has been a fantastic experience".

Despite the disappointment for the Brits, today's final turned out to be one of the most exciting Olympic finals in history. A double clear from Sweden's Rolf Goran-Bengtsson and Canada's Eric Lamaze meant a jump off ensued to decide the gold and silver medals. The Canadian produced yet another clear to take the gold with Rolf Goran-Bengtsson lowering a single fence claiming the silver.

Seven combinations finished on four faults and had to jump off for the bronze. America's Bezie Madden produced the fastest clear to take the bronze.

Gold Eric Lamaze Canada
Silver Rolf Goran-Bengtsson Sweden
Bronze Bezie Madden USA

British Team Announced for World Reining Championships 2008-08-28

The British Reining (BR) selection committee has announced the riders to form Team GB for 2008 FEI World Reining Championship in Manerbio, Italy.

The Team will be:

Doug Allen riding Francesca Sternberg's Jacs Little Sunrise or Francesca Sternberg's Hollywood Dun Star
David Deptford Riding John Faulkener's Old Vaquero
Tammy Greaves riding Patricia Greaves' The Magic of Whiz or Patricia Greaves' Jac Wonders Who
Francesca Sternberg Riding her own Yelena My Way or her own Just Gotta Shine

Reserve rider is Mark How riding Mrs Chris Neeld-Leslie's Animal Magnitism

Commenting on the selection

Adam Heaton, British Chef d'Equipe said:

"As the team manager I am fortunate to have five such talented riders available for the team, and I am very grateful to all the owners for making such excellent horses available. All the riders are used to competing at the highest possible level and this experience will help us achieve our potential in Italy. The riders will now focus on preparing the horses to peak on 12 September, when the competition starts in Manerbio."

Italy will host the brand new FEI event, the 2008 FEI World Reining Championship in Manerbio, Italy. Teams from 20 nations will compete for World Championship medals September 11-14. In past years, a World Reining Championship has only been offered during the FEI World Equestrian Games held every four years. This year, teams will compete for the prestigious World Championship medals outside the WEG.

Paralympic Equestrians Go for Gold

2008-08-29

The Paralympic Games are now just around the corner and the British Equestrian Team will be riding for Gold in Hong Kong. You can keep up with all the action here, including daily insights from Team Leader, Will Connell and up-to-date news and results.

Great Britain have a great history at the Paralympic Games and Para-Equestrian Dressage is no exception, winning 7 medals in Athens and 13 medals in last years World Championships. Great Britain has never been beaten in the Paralympic equestrian events, which have been part of the programme since 1996 and Britain have won team Gold on every occasion.

In 2008 the Equestrian Team will again be hoping for success. The team includes 6 time Paralympic Gold medallist Lee Pearson, multi-medallist Anne Dunham who will be contesting her fourth Paralympics and Debbie Criddle who has won treble Gold at consecutive European, World and Paralympic Championships.

20-year-old 2004 Paralympic Games Bronze medallist and World Championship Gold medallist, Sophie Christiansen joins the squad for her second Paralympics. Completing the team are three Paralympic debutants; 21-year-old Ricky Balshaw, 40-year-old Simon Laurens and 24-year-old Felicity Coulthard who all won medals at last year's World Championships.

The Equestrian events get underway on the 7th September with the Team competition and continue through to the 11th September. Paralympic Dressage is divided into 5 classifications from 1a through to IV, with grade 1a being for the most disabled riders. The riders compete within these grades in both a set, Championship test and a freestyle to music competition.

Will Connell's diary became infamous among equestrian supporters during the Olympic Games as he provided all the news from inside the Team GB equestrian camp in his online blog, he will continue this diary throughout the Paralympic Games.

Don't forget that on this site you can:

- Meet the riders and their horses
- Download a full competition schedule
- Read our handy guide to the competition
- Read Will's Diary latest diary instalment

Equestrian team aim for fourth successive gold 2008-09-05

Four riders from the seven-strong ParalympicsGB equestrian squad have been selected to contest the team medal, a title that Britain have held since the 1996 Paralympic Games when the events were first added to the programme.

The team will be Lee Pearson, Anne Dunham, Sophie Christiansen and Simon Laurens.

Pearson has won six Paralympic gold medals at the last two Games and comes to Beijing with a new horse, Gentleman. Although the pair have only been a partnership since January this year Pearson is confident he has found something special despite admitting that the horse is "young and naive".

"He is a big horse standing at 17.2 hands and he can be temperamental, he's like James Bond with a twist," said Pearson. "He has power and is not a spooky horse. Movement was one of the priority factors in choosing him, bearing in mind that the movement and temperament are what the judges look for in dressage."

Pearson admits that he is under pressure competing at his third Paralympic Games.

"Everyone will be looking at what I am doing. I will just have to ignore everything and concentrate on getting ready for the competitions. I will have to convince him (Gentleman) that we are just at home and try to give him security and confidence."

Simon Laurens, who joins Pearson in the team, is making his Paralympic debut in Hong Kong, where the equestrian events are taking place. He picked up two gold medals in his first senior team appearance for Britain at the 2007 World Championships and is "aiming and hoping for gold" in Beijing on his horse Ocean Diamond.

"Ocean Diamond is great," he said "More than a horse, he likes the show bit. It's all to do with fitness and I try to keep him fresh for competition."

Anne Dunham and Sophie Christiansen complete the team. Dunham has been part of the gold medal winning team on each occasion and will want to continue that tradition. Christiansen rode as an individual in Athens, claiming bronze, and picked up two individual gold medals at last year's World Championships.

The further three members of the equestrian squad, who will ride as individuals, are Ricky Balshaw, Debbie Criddle and Felicity Coulthard.

The team competition gets underway on the first day of the Games (Sunday 7 September) and concludes on Tuesday 9 September when all four riders have completed their team and individual championship tests.

The Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games officially open on Saturday (6 September) and will see 11 days of competition before drawing to a close on 17 September.

ParalympicsGB has 206 athletes competing across 18 sports at the Games.

For news updates on ParalympicsGB please visit www.paralympics.org.uk

ParalympicsGB acknowledge with gratitude the assistance given by the following partners: adidas (UK) Ltd, BP, British Airways, BT, Deloitte, EDF Energy, Lloyds TSB, Nortel.

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GB Paralympic Equestrian Team Prepare to Defend Team Gold 2008-09-05

The British Para-Equestrian Dressage team begin their Paralympic battle on Sunday, hoping to defend their individual medal titles and scoop a fourth consecutive gold in the hotly contested team competition. With seven riders making up the squad, the GB team is in a strong position, coming to the games as reigning World and Paralympic Champions. The athletes and team managers are taking nothing for granted though as they head towards one of their toughest challenges yet.

Great Britain has a great history at the Paralympic Games and Para-Equestrian Dressage is no exception, winning seven medals in Athens and 13 medals in last year's World Championships. Great Britain has never been beaten in the Paralympic equestrian events, which have been part of the programme since 1996 and Britain have won team Gold on every occasion.

Equestrian Team Leader Will Connell comments, "The whole team is on good form and dealing with any issues that may crop up. Preparation is going as well as we hoped; it's always difficult to judge the opposition until the competition starts, but we have done all we can to ensure our team is as well prepared as possible."

Six time Paralympic Gold medalist Lee Pearson comments, "I'm looking forward to the competition starting, doing the business and getting it done. I have a new horse which obviously brings concerns of course, but I will ride to my best and hope to medal. Three golds would be lovely. The village is really good - there are pros and cons to not being in Beijing, but in a big village where there is so much to do, it is easy to get tired. Here there is opportunity to rest, but space to get out and be an individual. The location is excellent and it is easy to get about by scooter or shuttle."

Experienced Paralympian, 59-year-old Anne Dunham comments, "I'm quietly confident; I'm really enjoying it out here and looking forward to shooting for gold. The venue is fantastic and the stables excellent. Teddy travelled and recovered really well and all is going to plan."

Ricky Balshaw, reserve rider in Athens makes his debut in the team and said, "I'm enjoying it in Hong Kong, it's such a great experience; the village is awesome with everything we need. Having access to food and drink at any time is great! My horse Deacon's Giorgi is heading

the right way and looking promising. I think the competition for team medals is between GB, Germany and Norway, but the South Africans also have some new horses and good riders.”

Squad newcomer Simon Laurens added, “Getting around Hong Kong is easy. The train is excellent and everyone is very friendly. I have been pleasantly surprised by how easily I’ve found it to ride in the heat and have ridden in my competition jacket and coped well. Ocean Diamond travelled well and has recovered well and I’m very pleased with how he’s going. I believe he will be spot on at just the right time.”

20-year-old Athens bronze medallist Sophie Christiansen comments, “Paralympic Games are so different to anything else it’s such a highlight. It’s great being in Hong Kong, I feel very much part of the games even though we are not in the main hub in Beijing. There are so many volunteers here working hard to give us the Paralympic experience. We gave Lambrusco a few days to recover as he was a little dehydrated after the flight, but he is absolutely fine now. The vet has been great and my horse is getting used to the atmosphere.”

Deborah Criddle goes into her third Paralympics, defending triple gold titles from Athens in 2004. She comments, “My horse is going better than I anticipated he would be at this stage. The acclimatisation work we did at home has prepared us well and I am happy riding in the conditions. The village is even better than I expected, everyone here is very friendly and helpful and the transport to the venue is very easy.”

Paralympic first timer Felicity Coulthard comments, “Everything is going really well. Being here in Hong Kong is an amazing experience and I am looking forward to the competition starting. My horse Roffelaar travelled well and it’s great to be here with him.”

The Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games opens on September 6. The equestrian events at the Games take place in Hong Kong at the Sha Tin Racecourse and will run from September 7 to 11. Four members of the squad will ride in the team competition that takes place on Sunday.

Winning warm-up for Paralympians

2008-09-06

ParalympicsGB riders Debbie Criddle and Felicity Coulthard triumphed in their warm-up competitions in Hong Kong on Friday night, leaving the British equestrian camp in positive spirits.

“All in all, it was a good evening’s work,” said equestrian team leader Will Connell. “But really it leads to nothing but positive morale in the camp so now, it’s all go, go, go.”

Taunton-based Criddle is looking to repeat her performance in Athens where she won three gold medals. She took a positive step towards that by winning the grade III warm-up test in impressive style.

“Debbie’s test was lovely, truly lovely,” said Connell. “The horse really grew in confidence as the test went on and showed no signs of stage fright.

“With a score of more than 70 per cent she won the grade 3 individual and her performance certainly bodes well for the competition proper, especially since her group is particularly hot with a German and Belgian rider who are normally there or thereabouts.”

Twenty-four year old Felicity Coulthard is making her Paralympics debut, securing her place in the squad with a bronze medal at the 2007 world championships. She finished top of the grade two test.

“Felicity put in a good, safe performance with room for improvement,” says Connell.

The other British rider to perform in the warm up was Ricky Balshaw who made some small but costly mistakes.

“Ricky will bemoan his two halts which really let him down during his test – and they were expensive,” commented Connell. “There was lots to like and the scores were very close so we know he’s in the mix when it comes to the test for medals.”

Anne Dunham, Lee Pearson, Sophie Christiansen and Simon Laurens complete the ParalympicsGB equestrian squad and will ride in the team test on Sunday 7 September.

Those riders not competing in the team competition contest the warm-up in order that all combinations have ridden in the arena the same number of times by the start of the individual competition.

Laurens banks strong score for equestrian team **2008-09-07**

Equestrian Simon Laurens opened Britain’s 2008 Paralympic campaign with a safe and solid performance in the early morning session of the team competition.

The first ParalympicsGB athlete in action on day one, Laurens finished second to get Britain off to a positive start in pursuit of their fourth consecutive team gold.

Gloucestershire-based Laurens, who at the age of 40 is competing at his first Paralympic Games, finished with a score of 69.54% bettered only by German rider Hannelore Brenner who was not far ahead on 71.62%.

Speaking of his horse Ocean Diamond, Laurens said:

“He is better than that. I was a little cautious whereas usually I am the opposite and a bit ‘gung-ho’ but now the team can bank a nice safe test and we’re certainly in the hunt.”

Laurens admitted the big occasion made him nervous but is confident he has something in reserve for the next test, which will also count towards the team result.

“It is a weird but really brilliant feeling being out here,” said Laurens. “I shut everything off and I was in my own ‘Simon-land’. On the first trot down the long side of the arena I suddenly thought, ‘Where am I?’, then I saw the high-rise buildings and remembered – I’m so used to just being in a field.

“Some movements that I’m usually rubbish at I nailed and other things that I’m usually good at I was just sat there as if I was having a picnic. I’m happy and the horse is happy and that is the main thing.”

Britain will be made to work to defend their title as Athens silver medallists Germany hope to put an end to GB’s unbeaten run in this event. Denmark also put in a good performance in the opening stages of the grade III test.

With Monday and Tuesday's individual championship tests also counting towards the final team result there is still a long way to go. The final three British riders will complete their team tests this evening in Hong Kong, with Lee Pearson the next to perform at 19.55.

Solid performance gives confidence to Coulthard **2008-09-08**

Britain's Felicity Coulthard finished sixth in the grade II individual championship test at Sha Tin racecourse in Hong Kong this morning scoring 65.55%.

The Lancashire-based Paralympic debutant said her first ride in front of a big crowd will help her produce a medal-winning performance in the freestyle later this week, a competition where the riders design their own test and set it to music. In the individual championship each grade rides the same test.

"It was not how I was expecting it in the ring," she said. "I didn't really notice the crowd and I enjoyed it.

"I'm very happy with the horse and looking forward to the freestyle now. The music I have really suits him and I probably have a better chance of getting a medal in that competition."

The 24-year-old won bronze in the grade II freestyle on her first appearance for GB at the 2007 world championships.

The remaining British riders will contest their individual championship tests tomorrow (Tuesday 9 September).

Equestrian team on course for fourth gold **2008-09-08**

Britain's equestrian team are on track to maintain their unbeaten Paralympic Games record as they chalked up three impressive 70-plus scores in the evening session at Hong Kong's Sha Tin racecourse, giving them a commanding 16 point lead over nearest rivals Germany at the halfway stage

With the individual test scores still to come they look set to win their fourth consecutive Paralympic team gold.

Lee Pearson proved why he is a six-times gold medallist as he coaxed his young and inexperienced horse, Gentleman, through the test in the intimidating arena to score an impressive 73.29%. That put him at the top of the grade 1b team test by a clear margin.

The large arena with its imposing screen and big audiences can unnerve some horses and Pearson had a tough job to settle Gentleman at the start of the test.

"For a young horse it was a good job in there," said Pearson. "I wish there was a bit more to the team test to keep him thinking but there isn't at this stage.

"He didn't seem to be very keen on the audience and felt very nervous. He's been quite inconsistent throughout quarantine, and since we've been out here in Hong Kong, so I'm really pleased with how it went. He can sometimes be a bit argumentative.

“He is a young horse and I can only take each day as it comes,” added Pearson. “It was quite nerve-wracking for both me and the horse before we went in. He has only done about 10 dressage tests in his life and he has a big personality to work with – the relationship I have with him has to be a bit like a marriage.”

Anne Dunham and Sophie Christiansen both added to Pearson’s good score, finishing first and second respectively in the grade 1a test. Twenty-year-old Christiansen is looking to add to the bronze medal she won in Athens, where she made her Paralympic debut, and with a score of 72% today she looks set to reach that gold.

“I’m really happy to add a good score to the team,” said Christiansen. “I feel under pressure to help win the team gold because we have won it on every occasion since they introduced equestrian to the Paralympics. It was a big ask but I think I handled it well and I’m looking forward to the next test now.”

With four Games behind her, 59-year-old Dunham is the most experienced equestrian in the team and it showed as she produced a calm and confident test to chalk up an impressive 75.18%.

“The horse was brilliant, he was an absolute darling and did everything I asked,” said a delighted Dunham. “I’m so proud of him and I definitely enjoyed it.

“It was the score I was aiming for. Anything over 70 would have been fine but I was aiming for 75. I hope to produce the same again on Tuesday in the individual, maybe even higher.

“I loved it in there and the horse wasn’t distracted. I was calm and he was calm,” she added. “I don’t think about anything when I am in the arena but the ride, the arena and my daughter who calls the test for me – that is all I focus on.”

Simon Laurens posted a strong score of 69.54% in the morning session which will now be discarded as only the three best scores count towards the final team mark. He is hoping that the lessons learned in the team test will allow him to produce a score over 70 in the next round.

The team riders are in action in individual championship competitions Tuesday 9 September. Their scores in these events will complete the team score.

Pearson takes Eighth Gold to seal Fourth Equestrian Team Title 2008-09-09

The British team and Lee Pearson both maintained their unbeaten status in Hong Kong this evening. The team collected a fourth consecutive gold by an impressive margin while Lee Pearson took his Paralympic gold tally to eight.

“It’s crazy to have 100% success at the Paralympics on three different horses,” said Pearson, “It’ll take time for this to sink in, but hopefully it’ll change my life as it shows I’m definitely not a flash in the pan.”

Staffordshire-based Pearson has never won anything but gold at a Paralympics, winning six gold medals at his previous two Paralympics. Tonight he added the team gold and the grade 1b individual gold, with a score of 73.24%, to take that tally to eight. He will be hoping to make it nine in the freestyle competition on Thursday.

Earlier this year Pearson retired his exceptional horse Blue Circle Boy from competition, a horse he had partnered to win numerous titles. He only began to work with new horse Gentleman in January this year, demonstrating a feat of tremendous skill and dedication to reach this level in such a short space of time. He paid tribute to everyone who had supported him through the last year which he describes as “tough,” particularly the team and support staff.

Pearson’s result also sealed the team medal for the fourth time, a title the team have held since the equestrian events were introduced to the Paralympics Games in 1996. Britain showed just how good they are by winning the team medal by a huge 26 point margin over second-placed Germany. Lee collected his gold alongside fellow team mates Simon Laurens, Anne Dunham and Sophie Christiansen.

Dunham and Christiansen both shone in their respective tests, picking up gold and silver respectively in the grade 1a individual championship, taking the equestrian medal tally to four. “I still can’t believe it. I’m scared to pinch myself in case I wake up,” said Dunham. “I’m so grateful to my owners, my support team and my country.”

Dunham is contesting her fourth Games and despite winning numerous medals in her competitive career, including two Paralympic team golds and five world championship titles, an individual Paralympic crown had eluded her. She clinched it in style tonight with an impressive 73.10%.

“I am elated to at last win individual gold on a horse I produced myself,” said the Wiltshire-based Dunham. “It’s been a long time coming. As I’ll be 60 this year this is an early birthday present.”

Christiansen improved on the bronze she won in Athens to take the silver with 72.80% as the British riders outscored the opposition by four per cent. “It’s finally sunk in,” said Berkshire student Christiansen. “I’m so pleased. I couldn’t have asked for more. I knew it would be close but I’m really happy for Anne.”

Three other British athletes were in action today; Shropshire-based Ricky Balshaw made his Paralympic debut tonight in the same grade as Pearson and cites him as one of his inspirations. He put in a solid performance to score 64.95% and finish in 5th place.

“I’ve been having a few problems in training which didn’t show up tonight,” said Balshaw, “I’m really excited about the freestyle. I really enjoyed myself and had great fun. I’ve learnt that I can be a little braver with the horse as he was full of energy and wasn’t fazed by the atmosphere.”

In the grade III test earlier in the evening luck was not with British riders Debbie Criddle and Simon Laurens as both their horses reacted to the atmosphere in the imposing arena to keep them out of the medals on this occasion.

“I’m absolutely gutted because it was within my grasp,” said Athens triple-gold medallist Criddle, “I lost it in one movement and then couldn’t remember where to go next, I lost 10 marks and you can’t win if you lose 10 marks.

“He was spooky and unpredictable from the beginning,” said Criddle who finished in 5th place on a score of 68.2%. “I need to have him going more forwards in the freestyle which I am now looking forward to.”

Gloucestershire-based Laurens experienced similar problems as his horse, Ocean Diamond, failed to find the form he had did in the team test and could only manage 62.88% to leave him in 8th place.

“He’s a horse and these things happen,” said Laurens “you have to pick yourself up, smile and crack on.

“The horse warmed up like a star, as he did yesterday, but then I went down the centre line and something startled him in the corner, he was very tense and it was a survival task after that. I came here with individual medal hopes and I hope to be back in top form on Thursday for the freestyle.”

All riders now look forward to the freestyle with Felicity Coulthard performing tomorrow in the grade II and the remaining six riders compete on Thursday 11 September.

Gold and Silver for Britain's Equestrians 2008-09-09

Anne Dunham took gold and Sophie Christiansen silver to get Britain’s equestrians off to a gallop in Hong Kong on a night that could yield another medal fest for ParalympicsGB.

“I still can’t believe it. I’m scared to pinch myself in case I wake up,” said Dunham. “I’m so grateful to my owners, my support team and my country.”

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With these two scores counting towards the team total, Britain look set to collect team gold later this evening while more individual medals are available for Debbie Criddle, Simon Laurens, Lee Person and Ricky Balshaw.

Freestyle silver for cool Coulthard 2008-09-10

Felicity Coulthard won a fifth medal for the British Paralympic equestrian team tonight as she pulled out all the stops in her lively grade II freestyle test to grab the silver at her first Games with an impressive 71.06%.

“I’m very, very happy,” said Coulthard who watched her teammates notch up three golds and a silver in last night’s competition.

“I wasn’t necessarily expecting a score as good as that as there were some errors but I gave it my best effort. It was much cooler tonight which made it much easier for me.”

In the freestyle competition the riders design their own test and set the movements to suitable music. Lancashire-based Coulthard performed to Fiddler on the Roof which suited her horse, Rofellar, perfectly and impressed the judges.

Tomorrow is the final night of equestrian action when the remaining six British riders will contest their freestyle competitions.

Lee Pearson is looking for his ninth Paralympic gold while Sophie Christiansen and Anne Dunham will be hoping for a repeat of their medal-winning performances.

Debbie Criddle, Simon Laurens and Ricky Balshaw hope to improve on their Beijing performances to finish in the medals.

Equestrian medal haul starts with gold and silver **2008-09-11**

Sophie Christiansen and Anne Dunham got the last night of equestrian action off to a flying start for ParalympicsGB winning a gold and silver medal respectively.

“I can’t believe it. I’ve wanted this for so long,” said Christiansen, who scored a massive 76.17%. “Team gold is nice but an individual gold is what I came here for.

“I’ve had so many text messages wishing me luck and well done from back home. My friends have really been a part of this and everyone has been rooting for me. I’m going back to university when I get back. I’m in my third year and I really need to take that seriously.”

Currently studying a degree in maths at Royal Holloway University in London, Christiansen has been vying for the top spot with Dunham since she sprang onto the scene at the 2005 European championships with double gold. They share the overall grade 1a spoils equally this time with two golds and a silver each.

“It’s been so close all year and it was very close today,” added Christiansen. “I am pleased for Anne she really deserves it – if it wasn’t for her I wouldn’t be at such a high standard. We really push each other.”

“It was a job well done,” said 59-year-old Dunham who praised her horse. “I thoroughly enjoyed it and Teddy was a really good boy. He did everything spot on and the judges loved it.”

Four-time Paralympian Dunham had to switch horses shortly before leaving for Athens due to an injury and was disappointed to come home with just team gold.

“This has been my best Paralympics not only for the venue but because I came here with a horse I knew, a true partner.”

Pearson wins ninth gold as GB rides supreme **2008-09-11**

Lee Pearson won his ninth Paralympic title as Britain took two golds and three silvers on the final day of competition in Hong Kong.

Pearson won in impressive style with 77.06% as the British team proved they are the masters of freestyle, taking ParalympicsGB's 2008 equestrian medal haul to 10 – the most ever at a Paralympic Games.

“I want to cry, but I can't,” said an overwhelmed Pearson. “I can't believe we made it a one, two. I'm over the moon with my 100% success rate.”

Pearson, who has won three golds at three consecutive Paralympics, was equally delighted for teammate Ricky Balshaw who finished second to take his first medal.

“I rode my arse off and I couldn't have done any more,” said Shropshire-based Balshaw. “This is a great venue, the people are great, and I have enjoyed every minute of it.

“Ricky and I have worked so hard,” added Staffordshire-based Pearson. “I'm exhausted but I just want to enjoy my success, I don't think it's sunk in yet.

Pearson's feat is even more remarkable given that he only established a partnership with his horse Gentleman in January. He paid tribute to everyone who had supported him, particularly the British team and his family.

“I was more nervous for these three competitions than I have ever been for any competition in my life,” he said. “I rode my heart out and I don't think Gentleman will ever know how much he has changed my life.”

Grade III rider Simon Laurens, who performed his test in the morning session of his competition, joined the medal party by adding silver to the overall tally with a Latin-inspired performance to a Ricky Martin soundtrack.

“At last, I am over the moon,” said Gloucestershire-based Laurens, who clinched his medal with a score of 73.5%. “That's much more like Ocean Diamond. I'm pleased for the horse and myself.

“I chose the soundtrack because I don't like boring music. It's lively for me and the horse likes it as well. He's a little Latin mover. It's been awesome, amazing. I've had ups and downs but to finish like that is great.”

Debbie Criddle could not add to the three gold medals she won in Athens as she missed out on the bronze by a tenth with a score of 73.11% in the high scoring grade III competition.

“This is the biggest occasion the horse has ever been to,” said Taunton-based Criddle. “The atmosphere here is wonderful but it is just too much for him at this point. Next year we'll be so much better, he just needs to learn a bit more.”

Earlier in the evening Sophie Christiansen and Anne Dunham won gold and silver respectively in the grade 1a competition meaning Britain's riders won five gold and five silver medals.

The 10 medals won by the Paralympians led the way in another successful year for the British equestrian teams. 28 medals were achieved across the equestrian disciplines, half of which were gold.

The Olympic discipline under-21 teams again showed their flair and promise, picking up 14 medals between them in eventing and show jumping. With Olympic medals to add plus medals again on the international driving stage, it has been another golden season for the teams.

"All the riders, the grooms and the team staff have contributed to a good season," commented World Class Performance Director Will Connell. "I am particularly delighted for the Paralympic team and their medal haul is testament to their dedication and determination. Our under-21 teams continue to impress, showing that the whole World Class Programme and disciplines' under-21 programmes are reaping rewards; there is much hope for the future as we enter a new Olympiad. We continue rely on the generosity and support of our owners, for which I am most grateful and without which we would not be able to continue."

The para-equestrian dressage riders once again dominated their competition at the Paralympic Games, exceeding their own records in Hong Kong where the equestrian events were held. The team remained unbeaten, winning the team title with an impressive 25 point lead over closest rivals Germany, to add a fourth title to those they have won on every occasion since the equestrian events were introduced in Atlanta in 1996.

Anne Dunham and Sophie Christiansen shared the spoils in the grade 1a competition, making it a one, two in both the individual championship test and the freestyle, giving them a gold and silver apiece to add to their team golds.

There was no hiding Dunham's elation at picking up an individual gold, something that had eluded her so far at her three previous Paralympic Games despite winning numerous medals.

"I still can't believe it. I'm scared to pinch myself in case I wake up," she said. "I'm so grateful to my owners, my support team and my country. It's been a long time coming, I'll be 60 this year so it's an early birthday present."

Lee Pearson was again the star of the show, adding three gold medals to the six he won in Athens and Sydney, retaining his personal unbeaten Paralympic record.

"It's crazy to have 100 per cent success at the Paralympic Games on three different horse," said Pearson. "It'll take time for this to sink in but hopefully it'll change my life as it shows I'm not a flash in the pan."

Completing the gold medal winning team was Simon Laurens who added individual silver to the tally in the freestyle competition. Two more silver medals were added by fellow Paralympic debutants Ricky Balshaw and Felicity Coulthard in their respective grades.

A few weeks earlier in Hong Kong the Olympic teams had mixed fortunes. Two weeks of ups, downs, 'if onlys' and maybes finished with two bronze medals, both won in the eventing competition.

The eventing team of Kristina Cook, Daisy Dick, Sharon Hunt, William Fox-Pitt and Mary King clinched the bronze with outstanding performances across country and in the show jumping after making a less than perfect start which saw them lying in fourth place after the dressage phase.

Fox-Pitt and Philip Adkins' Parkmore Ed flew round the cross-country phase on the third day of competition to help boost the teams chances of a medal, posting the second fastest time on a day where no rider managed to get round within the time.

"My week has been full of 'if onlys' and 'maybes'," said Fox-Pitt after the final show jumping phase, "but that's the sport. Yesterday couldn't have gone better Parkmore Ed was remarkable. It turned out fantastically well, not short of a miracle and we are very proud of our bronze."

Cook and the young horse Miners Frolic, owned by Mr & Mrs Nicolas Embiricos and Sarah Pelham, added an individual bronze following a thrilling second round of jumping. Both Cook and King were in the line-up for individual medals at the start of the show jumping but an uncharacteristic two fences down for King in the first round left her outside of the individual medal chances.

Joint 6th going into the final jumping round, Cook had less than a fence between her and the leaders. She put in a calm clear round to put the pressure on those above her, enough to clinch the individual bronze.

"He was super and really deserved a medal, he was fantastic," said an emotional Cook afterwards. "When it gets to that stage its all about mind over matter, he's an amazing horse and has been fantastic in all three stages."

Emma Hindle was the British star of the dressage competition, finishing in seventh place individually, a placing only bettered by a British rider when Christopher Bartle finished joint 6th in 1984. Hindle had not enjoyed the best of preparations for the Games, undergoing an operation to remove a tumour just a month beforehand.

"Six weeks ago I had a major operation," said Hindle after her final test, "so to finish so high in the placings is extra special. I can't believe how many people have believed in me. The morale in the British Equestrian camp has been amazing; I'm used to being involved in rivalry but now I'm proud to be part of such a great team."

Things did not go quite to plan in the team competition, with the team eventually finishing in fifth place. Jane Gregory and Lucky Star did not perform to their potential, losing marks for some small but expensive mistakes. Laura Bechtolsheimer suffered in the humid conditions as her excitable horse Mistral Hojris struggled to cope with the electric atmosphere in the arena. Despite a fantastic start to her team test, she later suffered a navigational error and eventually finished on a disappointing 65.91%. It was enough, however, to qualify her for the individual competition where she found some better form to finish in 18th place overall.

The show jumping team had a mixture of outstanding performances and disappointments. Michael Whitaker's mount, Portofino was lame before the veterinary inspection and was withdrawn with Nick Skelton and Lisa Hales' Russel taking his place in the team of four.

John Whitaker and Rebecca Stones' Peppermill jumped in the preliminary round of the competition where the combination looked to be on good form but the horse unfortunately suffered a muscular problem before the first round of the team competition and it was decided that it would be not in the horse's best interests for him to jump. Even with three horses and no chance of a discard score, the remaining three riders still finished in the top ten to qualify them for the second round of the team competition.

With Peppermill back to full fitness the ground jury ruled that Whitaker could jump him in the final round of the team competition, putting medal hopes back on the board. This was short lived when the jury of appeal upheld an objection by seven Chefs d'Equipe and he was

unable to jump. Despite some outstanding performances, challenging for the team medals with just three riders and no chance of discarding a score proved to be too tough a task as they eventually finished in seventh place.

Tim Stockdale with John Boshers' Corlato and Ben Maher with Daniel Paul's Rolette both performed extremely well individually to keep themselves in with hopes of individual medals right up until the last round where both their mares started to show signs of tiredness, leaving them in 16th and 20th place respectively.

Britain's youth teams continued to shine again this season with the eventing pony, junior and young rider teams scoring seven European medals between them, including four gold.

The eventing juniors took full advantage of a home venue at Thirlestane Castle in Scotland to pick up two golds and a silver. The team of Sienna Myson-Davies, Libby Soley, Willa Newton and Amy Hawley led the team competition from start to finish to win the title. Myson-Davies and Soley also picked up the gold and silver respectively.

The eventing young riders also picked up three medals including the team gold, plus individual gold for Emily Llewellyn and bronze for Ben Hobday. The Pony team picked up the team silver.

The young show jumpers also had reason to celebrate with six European medals, including three team titles in the junior, pony and children on horses competitions. They also scored team bronze in the young rider competition, George Whitaker won top honours in the pony competition and Graham Gillespie picked up the silver in the children on horses European championship.

The non-Olympic international disciplines were also keen to add to the medal party with the junior drivers picking up two bronzes and a gold at the Junior World Trophy.

The reining team just missed out on the medals, finishing fourth at their world championships with what they termed the best British reining team ever. Vaulting also enjoyed some success with Joanna Eccles, the best placed Briton, finishing fifth in the world championships where at just 19-years-old she was one of the youngest competitors. The World endurance championships are due to take place in November.

"We now look not only to next season but we enter a new Olympiad leading to London 2012," added Connell. "We will be doing everything we can to build on our successes and to learn from where we can do better. I continue to be incredibly grateful to our owners and to UK Sport funding."

All the teams, with the support of the World Class Programme and Lottery funding via UK Sport, are now looking forward to 2009. This promises to be another exciting season which sees the eventers contest for an 8th consecutive European title while the first joint dressage and jumping European championships comes to Windsor. A full schedule of under-21 championships again promises to add to the medal tally and the other international disciplines will be in action on the World or European stage.

Equestrian Olympic and Paralympic heroes join Parade
2008-10-16

The streets of London will be awash with a tide of gold, silver and bronze on Thursday 16th October as over 350 of Britain's Olympic and Paralympic heroes are set to parade through the capital.

Britain's public are expected to turn up in their thousands to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the athletes who lit up the summer of 2008 with their inspirational and unforgettable performances while recording Team GB's best performance for 100 years at the Beijing Olympic Games.

Rightfully leading the way in the first of 12 floats will be Team GB and ParalympicsGB's all-conquering cycling teams. Triple Beijing gold medallist Chris Hoy will be accompanied by fellow Olympic Champions Nicole Cooke, Victoria Pendleton and Rebecca Romero alongside Paralympic Champions Sarah and Barney Storey, Rachel Morris and Simon Richardson, among others.

Closely following the cyclists in float two will be Britain's outstanding rowers who will have no fewer than 22 Olympic medals on show after once again dominating on the water. They will be joined by Paralympic rowing champions Tom Aggar and Helene Raynsford, who became the first athletes to win Paralympic rowing golds, when the sport made its debut at the Games this summer.

Floats three to five will contain the Olympic and Paralympic athletics squads, including London's own Olympic 400m Champion Christine Ohuruogu and two-time Paralympic gold medallist David Weir. Wheelchair tennis medallists Peter Norfolk and Jamie Burdekin will also be aboard this float.

Team GB's first ever taekwondo medallist Sarah Stevenson will accompany modern pentathlon silver medallist Heather Fell on float six. They will be joined by the Olympic and Paralympic equestrian teams including Beijing triple gold medallist Lee Pearson.

Look out for Britain's sailors on float seven. Having convincingly ruled the waves in China, all of Team GB's Olympic gold medallists, including triple Olympic Champion Ben Ainslie, will be present to join the party atmosphere in London.

Gold medallist boxer James Degale will be punching the air with delight from float eight, along with Britain's medal-winning Paralympic archers. Powerhouse canoeing champion Tim Brabants and Britain's two Paralympic football teams will be conducting the crowds from float ten.

Fourteen-year-old Olympic diving sensation Tom Daley will be joined on float eleven by eleven-time Paralympic gold medallist Dave Roberts. Britain's pair of double gold medallist swimmers will bring up the rear on the twelfth and final float as thirteen-year-old Paralympian Eleanor Simmonds will be beside Rebecca Adlington to complete the line up of heroes.

The parade is due to begin in front of the Mansion House in the City at 11am. The athletes will travel down Great Victoria Street and past St Paul's Cathedral. They will head down Fleet Street, past the Royal Courts of Justice and down the Strand.

The first float is due to arrive in Trafalgar Square at around 12:30pm. The athletes are due to assemble on the north terrace overlooking the square with proceedings expected to have been finished by 1.30pm.

All timings are approximate and details are subject to change. Route information is available at www.london.gov.uk.