

**Preparation for potential Olympic Grooms
2008-01-25**

In January nearly 50 grooms of potential Olympic and Paralympic horses for the 2008 Beijing Games received training and advice from the World Class Programme. It was also an opportunity for the Grooms to give their opinions on a number of challenges that will be faced in Hong Kong.

Two separate conferences were held in Reading and Nottingham in order to share information and give guidance on preparing horses for the coming Games. The Grooms of the horses in contention for selection to the Olympic and Paralympic Games will play a vital role in both preparing that horse in the run up to the Games and also during the competition, if selected. They were given an insight into the test event to which Britain took three horses to last August, including the lessons that were learned from that experience. They were also given advice on specific preparation steps planned for the potential horses, including monitoring, travel plans and climate issues.

There were presentations from experienced grooms, Jenny Ellis and Jackie Potts, who shared their views and experiences gained first hand from grooming at past Olympic events. Team Vets John McEwen and Jenny Hall spoke about veterinary information that grooms need to be aware of. The day also included presentations from Performance Director, Will Connell and Eventing Performance Manager Yogi Briesner.

The events were a great opportunity to share useful information with the grooms and also a chance for them to meet each other and share ideas and experiences. This is the first time World Class has organised an event such as this one, the positive feedback received indicates that they will definitely consider this approach in the future.

**Call for Volunteers to help at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games
2008-02-21**
Call for Volunteers to help at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games

Registrations are now being requested for volunteers at the 2010 World Equestrian Games, set to take place in Kentucky Horse Park, USA from September 25 until October 10, 2010. It is envisaged that at least 6,000 volunteers will be needed to work before and during the Games and people with a range of skills are sought for a variety of roles.

The Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games promises to be an exciting event and plays host to the World Championships of the eight equestrian disciplines recognised by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI): Dressage,

Eventing, Show Jumping, Para-Equestrian Dressage, Driving, Endurance, Reining and Vaulting. The Games have never been held outside of Europe before; nor have all eight disciplines previously been held together at a single site. It is anticipated that more than 600,000 spectators will attend the 16-day competition and Team GBR would be proud to have British volunteers out at the Games.

There is a web-based volunteer registry system in place. For more information and to register your interest see: <http://www.feigames2010.org>

Team GBR and Toggi continue Clothing Partnership 2008-02-25

A passion for equestrianism and a dedication to supporting world class talent lies at the heart of the Toggi philosophy and no where is this more evident in the fantastic Team GBR range.

Toggi and Team GBR have announced an ongoing partnership with Toggi as the official clothing supplier. As part of this agreement with the British Equestrian Federation (BEF), Toggi clothing is being worn by British riders competing on behalf of their country, their support staff and is available to purchase by supporters.

Toggi has created a new fantastic Team GBR supporters collection for 2008, with a percentage of the sales going back to the international Teams. The Team GBR product range includes stylish Toggi jackets, gilets, sweatshirts, shirts and baseball caps, which all feature the prestigious Team GBR logo

"The Team riders have often commented on the amazing number of supporters that follow Team GBR around the Championships - hearing them clapping and cheering is a massive boost and makes riders proud and reminds them that the Nation is behind them. A typical comment by one of our most successful riders was When you can see the Stands full of supporters wearing Team GBR clothing it makes you sit up taller and reminds you that you are there to win, not just for yourself but for everyone that takes pride in the success of the Team" Will Connell, Performance Director.

The Toggi Team GBR range is available from selected Toggi retailers nationwide. Further information about the range is available [here](#).

FEI Pre-Olympic Heat and Humidity Workshop Presentations available on-line 2008-02-29

A greatly successful FEI Pre-Olympic Workshop on Heat and Humidity took place in Lausanne on 17 February 2008. The goal of this Workshop was to share information and to help NFs, veterinarians, riders, Chefs d'Equipe,

owners, members of the press and others to understand the science and reasoning behind the rules and recommendations that will be in place to protect the equine athletes at the 2008 Olympic Games. For more information and to download the presentations see [here](#).

Tustain Overcomes Odds

2008-03-07

Paralympic golden girl Nicola Tustain would be the first to admit that she's not had the best of build ups ahead of the 2008 Paralympics.

Taking a glance at her sporting CV, you would think that making the podium at the Beijing Paralympics would be a routine procedure.

The Conwy sportswoman already boasts six Paralympic medals – three golds and three bronze – from the equestrian arena. But her prize horse of four years, Prinz Heinrich, went lame at the start of the year:

“This year has been really tough - in February, Prinz Heinrich went lame, just as we were producing our best ever work together in preparation for this year's World Championships in July.”

As if she didn't have problems enough, tragedy struck further when she fell off a young horse and fractured her coccyx.

“I was worried that I would not be able to ride for about five months and there were only eight weeks to go before the Worlds. I had a chat to my personal physiotherapist and we worked really hard together everyday and gradually started riding again much sooner than expected.”

Against all odds, she was asked to represent Team GB and she was forced to pluck 20-year-old Hotstuff out of retirement to win gold and silver.

Alas, Hotstuff is of an age where he is not up to the long haul flight to Hong Kong, where the 2008 Paralympic dressage events will take place. It has meant that Tustain has been on a desperate, worldwide search for a horse, up to the job of competing at such a high standard. It's in the nick of time, with qualification looming on the horizon, that it seems the quest may finally be over.

The answer to her prayers may be Rivaldo – a dark brown, nine-year old Oldenburg:

“I found him in Warwickshire and fell in love with him the minute I saw him! He seems to tick all the right boxes for a potential horse for the next Paralympics. He seems to have a good temperament, which is what I'm really looking for. His three paces – walk, trot and canter – look in order and he has fabulous conformation [his statue and the overall picture].”

Rivaldo of Berkeley has been stabled at the family farm near Corwen since the middle of October:

“He seems to have a laidback personality - he has already made friends with the rest of my pets and is becoming more and more of a family member. He has even started giving me kisses on my cheek! If all goes to plan, we’ll work together to achieve my dream – three gold medals in Hong Kong next year.”

She has also received support from The Berkeley Group, parent company to some of the UK’s leading Development Brands. The company is the principle sponsor of Tustain. Already, they had helped her finance Prinz Heinrich and now they have stepped in to support her with the financing of Rivaldo:

“Equestrian sport is so expensive. I am supported by the National Lottery, which is obviously a massive help. I am also really thankful of the support from The Berkeley Group – hopefully I can reward them with a Paralympic medal!”

Tustain is a competitor in freestyle dressage - a type of competition in which judges award points for the performance of the horse and rider in a series of movements testing the rider's control and the horse's training.

She is currently working hard to get into tip top shape with her personal fitness instructor, “I need to get as fit and strong enough as possible for the whole Paralympics experience.”

And it’s not just the rider that is put through the paces. “We’ll get Rivaldo rugged up so that he gets used to training in hot conditions - as we really don’t have the weather, especially in North Wales up in the hills!”

Tustain started riding competitively when she was ten as a way of escaping the bullying she experienced throughout secondary school:

“Unfortunately, I was one of those kids who was a target for bullying – simply because of the way I looked! This knocked my confidence completely. I started riding as a distraction and was introduced to dressage at my local Riding for the Disabled Centre. It was really scary to begin with, but I soon started to take it seriously. I used to win at the regional champs to qualify for the big one – the national championships.

“I first went to the National Championships when I was 12 and won my class! I remember being taken aback with the GB Squad – particularly one rider, Jo Jackson. She was all dressed up with her Team GB kit and looked really smart. It was then I said to myself - one day I would like to have the GB Badge on my jacket and so the story goes on...” Sport has taken Tustain all over the world – and not just to stables and arenas. She says her biggest achievement was to be named top dressage rider of the year back in 2003 at the Animal Health Trust Awards. To date, she is the only Para dressage rider to take the title:

“It was great! I was nominated along with Noel Edmunds daughter so I was sharing the same table as their family – I danced all night with Noel and his family!”

And in 2004, she ditched her jodphurs for an evening gown as she stepped out on the red carpet among the world’s leading sporting legends at the Laureus World Sports Awards.

In between competing and travelling to GB Team Training in the heart of the Cotswolds, it is hard to believe that she manages to take time out to coach Paralympic hopefuls in North Wales:

“This means so much to me knowing that I’m helping other people achieve their dream – they can relate to me and at the same time not use excuses when they can’t do something!

“I also work with other children and adults who have multiple disabilities and I really enjoy watching the smiles on their faces. I’ve also designed “The Tustain Bar Rein” which is a special Bar Rein for riders to use with one hand.”

This tool is manufactured by her sponsor, Albion Saddlemakers, and is sold all around the world.

She may not have had the best of starts to her medal campaign, but let’s hope that Tustain is firmly back in the saddle.

Story reproduced with the kind permission of the Sports Council for Wales’

Countryside Raceday raises 47,000 2008-04-04

The Countryside Race Day, held at Cheltenham racecourse on the 16th November 2007 raised £47,000. This money will go to support our Olympic and Paralympic teams in their trip to the Beijing 2008 Games, where the equestrian events will be held in Hong Kong.

There were a number of fundraising activities which took place on the day, including the Team parading on the race course and being available to sign autographs. Events also included a live auction, a silent auction and a bottle stall.

Will Connell, World Class Performance Director comments, "It is a great achievement to raise this amount of money, I would like to thank all the hard working volunteers, Cheltenham Staff and Team Staff who made it happen!"

Great Results for Team GBR at CVI in Holland**

2008-04-30

The British National anthem was played more often than any other nation's at the CVI** held at the new Dutch Equestrian Federation Centre at Ermelo.

Joanne Eccles was an outstanding senior Individual winner, placed above the WEG silver medallist from Austria. Her younger sister Hannah came through to take the Junior Individual gold medal, both on W.H.Bentley lunged by John Eccles and Lucy Phillips the silver on Nikita lunged by Rebecca Morgan. The young team from Eagles Vaulting Group gained first place in the Junior team class on a new vaulting horse, Fortuitous, lunged by a first time International lunged, Kathryn Jeffress (Hunt). The Junior team was sponsored by Ross Offshore.

There were some excellent results for the rest of the Group, Ricky Davies placed 4th in the Male Individual and Louise Sinclair 4th in the Junior Individual, both on ILPH Islay lunged by Liz Mackay.

The horse scores were published separately for each class and the six British horses were all right up at the top of each class. John Eccle's W.H.Bentley was chosen as the best Individual horse. We thank the BEF for the help and advice given to provide the best conditions for travelling the horses abroad. They all looked in great form and were a credit to Equestrian Team GBR.

Horsing Around in Hong Kong

2008-05-01

Horsing around in Hong Kong

Preparing a venue to host the World's most famous sporting event is no mean feat. Preparing a venue to house more than 200 horses and 200 grooms, together with all the associated Olympic competition facilities and various support functions is certainly no walk in the park either.

But some 6,000 miles away the final preparations are being put in place to the Olympic and Paralympic equestrian venues – after just two years of work. And the results are pretty impressive.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club have provided the Hong Kong Equestrian venues of Sha Tin and Beas River. The core venue at Sha Tin is overlaid on the Sports Institute, with additional training areas being provided within the racecourse. The Jockey Club Beas River Country Club and the adjacent golf course house a temporary cross-country course and separate stables and facilities for when horses are competing in that phase.

Recognised worldwide as a leading centre of equine sports, Sha Tin has provided a sound base on which to build the equestrian Olympic venue, including its two gallop tracks (one turf, one all-weather) and state of the art

veterinary facility. In adapting the new venue the most innovative ideas have been incorporated, while making the optimum use of the existing sports facilities – resulting in a compact but comprehensive site.

So just what facilities are there?

- Main competition arena (100m x 80m)
- 5.7 kilometre cross-country course
- 12 outdoor training arenas, sand and grass
- Air-conditioned indoor training arena (35 x 75 metres)
- 800m cross country training course
- 1200m bridle track
- Gallop track (turf and all weather)
- Main stabling complex accommodating 216 horses
- Holding stables for cross country horses (x80)
- Equine clinic
- Media centre
- Spectator stands with some 18,000 seats
- Stabling area for reserve horses

All of the competitions will take place in the main arena at Sha Tin, with the exception of the cross-country for the Eventers, which is at the luxurious setting of the Jockey Club Beas River Country Club and the adjacent golf course.

This is a 25 minute car journey away from the main venue, so will involve the horses travelling to the site the day before. Riders will need to make several journeys to Beas River to walk the course, but Eventing Performance Manager Yogi Breisner says that despite being a logistical hindrance, the trip may also have positive consequences.

"Journeys in the car to walk the course will act as good time for the riders to get their thoughts together and try to relax. It may also prove to be a good time for me to have one-to-one chats with them.

"In terms of the horses, the travel is an inconvenience, but is no more than that. As an Olympic equestrian team we have had to travel the horses to the cross-country course many times before, often further, and it has never had any detrimental effects."

The cross-country course has a beautiful grass cover (thanks to the humidity and heavy rain fall) with a solid layer underneath. In racing terms, the going would be described as good or good to firm.

Hotels for Horses and Humans
2008-05-02

Horses

The horses' welfare is the primary priority for the Games and making sure they are as comfortable as possible during their stay is very important.

The 'Test Event' team, which visited the venue in August 2007, (see [here](#)) were reassured that the facilities for the horses both at the main venue at Sha Tin, and also at the cross country course at Beas River, were outstanding.

All of the stables have rubber matting and measure a roomy 3.6m x 3.6m. The stable blocks are all air conditioned, with water points and electrical plugs, plus there are individual fans for each stable. The reserve horses will be stabled separately – in a block near the main stables at Sha Tin.

Space is limited in terms of tack / storage with an allocation of one room per four horses, so the World Class Programme have been working on solutions to maximise the space available.

The venue benefits from exceptional veterinary facilities, at both the equine hospital and lab on the Sha Tin race course, together with additional facilities adjacent to the Olympic stables. There's also a fully equipped Farrier are.

To help cope with the heat the venue has extensive cool down facilities, including a number of misting tents and portable cooling karts. All the competitions across the disciplines will take place either early in the morning or late in the evening to avoid peaks in temperature and humidity.

Security into the training and stable areas at Sha Tin and Beas River will be tight with access for accredited personal only, in terms of bio security, there are hand wash at all entrances and exits.

Humans

Housing the human athletes and support staff has been a more complicated operation than housing the horses!

Two thirds of the grooms will stay on site near the horses at Sha Tin, with the remaining grooms staying at a hotel about 1 mile from the Venue. A number of the Team GB riders and support staff will stay at the Olympic / Paralympic Village (a hotel taken over in its entirety by the Organising Committee, approximately 1.5 miles from the Venue)

The remaining riders, support staff and owners will travel a little further to a hotel in Kowloon – a 25 minute journey in a taxi or via the underground (which puts the London tube to shame).

Countdown

So, with the countdown on and the Games just a few months away, preparations are now well underway to help ensure that Equestrian Team GB 2008 Olympics and Paralympics is successful, safe and enjoyable. And all those involved can rest assured that Sha Tin offers far more than its Chinese translation suggests of 'sandy fields'!

Preparation, Preparation, Preparation!

2008-05-02

Yogi Breisner and Will Connell explain their experiences of the Test event in 2007.

In August 2007 Great Britain took a group of horses and riders to the Good Luck Beijing 10th Anniversary Cup CCI2* (the 'Test Event') in Hong Kong – to trial the Olympic facilities, provide an insight into the conditions and gain learnings for the 'real' event in 2008. During the event the team gathered various data, which has gone onto help inform the preparation plans for the potential Olympic and Paralympic horses.

The 'Test Event' group was made up of three event riders and their horses, together with two riders from the Paralympic squad, who travelled without horses. A team of support staff including coaches, vets, a doctor, and the Eventing and Para-Equestrian Dressage Performance Managers, plus the British Equestrian Federation (BEF) Performance Director also travelled to the event. The GBR attendance at the Test Event was fully funded by the World Class Programme, which receives its funding (Lottery and Exchequer) through UK Sport.

"This was a really valuable exercise, not only in helping with the squad's preparation, but also in helping to reassure all those involved of the quality of the facilities," said Eventing Performance Manager Yogi Breisner.

"We learnt a number of small things from the test event, rather than one huge finding – but essentially it confirmed we are doing all the right things in terms of preparation and when we are out there we can be confident that all the necessary planning has taken place."

The weather was seen as one of the main challenges with average temperatures of 28°C and humidity of 80%, so the team was keen to learn what impact these conditions would have on the riders and the horses.

"Despite the challenging conditions – very high temperatures and humidity – we felt the riders and horses coped fairly well," said David Hunter, Para-Equestrian Dressage Performance Manager.

"Obviously for some of our riders, particularly those in wheelchairs or with special casing or clamps, the conditions will be a particular challenge. We learnt that we need to allow extra 'rest / relaxation' time both for the riders, but also their carers to ensure everyone can perform at their best."

For some of the riders competing in these weather conditions will not be a new experience, as Will Connell, Performance Director for the BEF, points out: "A number of the riders and some of the horses in the World Class Programme have already competed successfully in hot and testing conditions

at previous International events, including the Olympics in Athens. This past experience will not only benefit them – but will also help to reassure other members on the teams."

Super League Kicks Off This Weekend **2008-05-07**

The 2008 Samsung Super League with FEI kicks off this weekend with the opening leg taking place in the seaside resort of La Baule in France on Friday 9th May (13.40 GMT).

Eight of the worlds top show jumping nations will compete at eight of the worlds best show jumping venues to decide the 2008 Champions. The eight nations which have qualified to compete in the 2008 season are Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA and Ireland.

The British contingent who will compete in La Baule will feature members of both the World Class Performance and Development Squad's and the Champion Evolution Squad;

British Olympian and World Class Performance Squad member, Nick Skelton from Alcester in Warwickshire will compete with the Hales' Family's bay stallion, Arko III with who he partnered to victory in the recent Grobbendonk Grand Prix, Lisa Hales' grey stallion Russel and Beverley Widdowson's seven-year-old grey gelding, Carlo.

World Class Performance Squad member Tim Gredley from Newmarket in Suffolk will ride Rowena Gredley's twelve year-old bay gelding Omelli, Timo IV, an eight-year old bay gelding also owned by Rowena Gredley and Fabriana a fourteen year-old bay mare with whom Tim won the Grand Prix on the Sunshine Tour earlier in the year.

Robert Smith from Shrewley in Warwickshire, also a British Olympian and member of the World Class Performance Squad will ride his own ten year-old bay gelding Ronaldo VI, Talan, an eight year-old bay stallion owned by Di and Pennie Cornish with whom Robert enjoyed numerous successes on this year Spanish Sunshine Tour and Sharon Baldwin's ten year-old bay stallion Vangelis S.

Twenty-five year old Ben Maher from Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire will ride Mr Daniel Paul's ten year-old bay mare Rolette. Ben and Rolette have already made their marks in the senior ranks, winning the Grand Prix at CSI-W Mechelen at the end of 2007 and jumping a double clear round in the Wellington Nations Cup earlier this year. Ben will also compete in La Baule with his father's 2005 Hickstead Derby winner Alfredo II and the Quainton Stud's eight year-old bay stallion, Quainton Quirifino Z. Ben is a member of the World Class Development Squad which is lottery funded through UK Sport

and provides support across a wide range of services as well as direct funding support.

Eighteen year-old William Whitaker who is based in Whatton, Nottinghamshire with his uncle Michael Whitaker, will make his second senior Nations Cup appearance, having jumped a double clear round on his debut in Prague in 2007. William will ride Loops de Batilly, a nine-year old bay gelding owned by Michael Whitaker, the nine year-old bay gelding Sarlino, owned by William's father and Loxley 57, an eight year-old bay gelding also owned by Michael Whitaker. William is also member of the World Class Development Squad which is lottery funded through UK Sport and provides support across a wide range of services as well as direct funding support and a member of the Champion Evolution Squad.

The British squad will be accompanied by Team Manager Derek Ricketts and Team Vet Robrecht Cnockaert MRCVS. Derek was a member of the last British team to win the World Championships, at Aachen in 1978, on his best known horse, Hydrophane Coldstream. He had a highly successful international jumping career from 1967-1993, winning European team gold and silver medals in 1977 and 1979 and holding an FEI gold badge for nations cup performances. He has been a member of the British Show Jumping Association's executive board since 1996 and in 2002 was appointed World Class Performance manager to the senior British jumping squad. Robrecht received his qualification from Gent University in Belgium. He runs a mobile practice which focuses on performance issues in sport horses. He has been working as veterinarian to the British show jumping team since 2005.

The Super League competition takes place over two rounds, over the same course, during the same day. It is judged under Table A, not against the clock with a time allowed in both rounds. The scores of the best three riders of a team of four are added together for each round, and the winner is the Team with the fewer penalties at the end of the competition. At the end of each Super League event, the winning teams will earn points based on their rankings; 1st place will earn 10 points, 2nd 7 points, 3rd 5 points, 4th 4 points, 5th 3 points, 6th 2 points, 7th 1 point and 8th 0.5 point. These points are doubled for the Final. Each year, the nation finishing last in the Samsung Super League with FEI is relegated and replaced by the nation finishing top in the FEI Nations Cup Series.

The seaside resort of La Baule is situated in the Pays de la Loire region in South Brittany, held its first Nations Cup competition in 1970 in conjunction with the World Championships. Since 1993 La Baule has been the annual French CSIO. In 2004 a new and larger stadium, known as the Francois Andre Stadium, with a new grass surface was built and has a seating capacity of 4,500. La Baule's proximity to the sea and the largest sand beach in Europe (used by the riders for exercising their horses during the show) and its extensive facilities are unparalleled. The town is situated approximately 450km from Paris. Nantes is the closest International airport to the showground.

The French round of the 2008 Samsung Super League with FEI boasts a whopping 408,000€ in prize money with over 25,000 spectators expected over the four days of competition. There will be fourteen competitions in total held during the show, the main classes as follows:

Friday 9th May – SAMSUNG SUPER LEAGUE WITH FEI – 1.40pm GMT

Saturday 10th May – DERBY MEETING – PAYS DE LA LOIRE – 2.45pm GMT

Sunday 11th May – GRAND PRIX LONGINES OF LA BAULE – 1.00pm GMT

The British Show Jumping Teams are strongly supported by the UK Sport lottery funded BEF World Class programme.

All the latest Samsung Super League with FEI news and information at www.samsungsuperleague.com. Follow the action, news and results from La Baule at www.labaule-cheval.com.

Lucy Wieggersma so close to a Badminton Victory 2008-05-08

World Class Development rider, Lucy Wieggersma came so close to lifting the famous Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Trophy, just missing out to Nicolas Touzaint (FRA) by 1.4 penalties.

Lucy, riding Shaabrak was in third place after dressage with a score of 37.4, and although jumping a fantastic cross-country round, over Hugh Thomas' tricky course, Lucy took a couple of long routes, which resulted in 8.4 time penalties that left her lying second overnight to the Frenchman.

The show jumping proved to be very influential throughout the final round, Lucy and Shaabrak just had one fence down, leaving Nicholas with one fence in hand, which he used up early on, and now it was down to whether he would hold his nerve to jump the rest of the course clear, one more fence down would hand the trophy to Lucy. However, Nicholas riding Hildago De L'Ile managed to keep the rest of the fences up and he became to first Frenchman to win this coveted trophy.

Afterwards, Lucy said, "I was thrilled with Shaabrak's performance in the dressage, and I know there is so much more improvement to come, and he also showed a considerable improvement in the show jumping phase, to which Peter Murphy, who is the World Class Development show jumping trainer, has been instrumental. The cross-country is our strongest phase, and if I hadn't taken the split second decision to go the long route at the Colt Pond the final result may have been different, but having made a slight mistake two fences earlier I felt at the time it was the right decision".

Lucy continues, "Shaabrak is feeling extremely pleased with himself and practically dragged me across the yard when we returned home on Sunday evening".

Although Lucy didn't take home the Badminton trophy, she did take home the Butler Bowl, which is awarded to the highest placed British Rider.

Three other World Class Development riders were competing at Badminton this year, Ruth Edge riding Muschamp Impala, who lay second after the dressage phase, but unfortunately had to retire on the cross-country course after a fall at the water complex.

Georgie Spence, at eighteen, was the youngest rider competing, rode a fantastic cross-country round to finish with only ten time penalties and lie seventeenth overnight. Unfortunately in the show jumping phase the combination clocked up a few penalties and they finished in thirtieth position. Georgie received a Saddle from the Master of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers, which is awarded to the highest placed rider who is not entitled to wear the adult Union Jack Badge.

Emily Baldwin, riding Drivetime lay seventh after dressage, and with twenty penalties cross-country were in thirty first position, but with only one fence down in the show jumping rose to a final placing of twenty fifth.

Vikki Underwood, World Class Development Programme Manager said, "Many congratulations to Lucy, who has shown that she is capable of producing a performance of the highest level that so nearly won her the Badminton trophy."

Vikki continues, "Both Georgie and Emily gained invaluable experience, and together with the combined support of World Class Development and their own support system, this gives them every chance to build for the future".

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.

Eventing Squad Announced for Beijing Olympic Games 2008
2008-05-09The British Olympic Association (BOA) today selected the Eventing riders to be part of Team GB for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

The Team will be:

William Fox-Pitt
riding Mrs Judy Skinner and Mr Michael Payne's Ballincoola

or Mr Philip Adkins' Parkmore Ed

or The Hon Finn & Mary Guinness' Tamarillo

Sharon Hunt

riding Mr & Mrs Terry Hunt's Tankers Town

Mary King

riding Mr & Mrs Eddie Davies and Miss Janette Chinn's Call Again Cavalier

or Mr & Mrs Eddie Davies and Miss Janette Chinn's Imperial Cavalier

Zara Phillips

riding BGC Partners & Associated Companies, inc. Cantor Index, Mr James Blackshaw and her own Toytown

Lucy Wieggersma

riding Mr and Mrs Mark Lean's Shaabrak

Commenting on their selection the athletes said:

William Fox-Pitt

"It is very exciting news, particularly with three horses in contention. Knowing this early in the year means we can prepare for the Games in the best possible way. The Olympics is the ultimate challenge and is one which I am really looking forward to."

Mary King

"I am over the moon to be picked to ride at what will be my fifth Olympic Games! Now the hard work starts making sure the horses are in tip-top condition. I have two potential horses, so I will work closely with my trainers to ensure we get the best possible results."

Sharon Hunt

"This really is a dream come true. I have owned and ridden Tankers Town since he was a four-year-old, so it feels even more special. I am looking forward to the whole experience and I am thrilled to be picked for my first Olympics and represent my country."

Lucy Wieggersma

"I am overwhelmed to have been picked. It has been my lifetime ambition to ride in an Olympics. I am particularly thrilled as I have ridden Shaabrak for ten

years – he is a real trooper and I shall now be wrapping him up in cotton-wool."

Zara Phillips

"It is nice to be selected, but we still have a long way to go. I am lucky in that Toytown has been to championship events before, so he knows about big occasions and has been consistent, but an Olympic Games really is special. I am delighted for Toytown as he really deserves it."

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

"I am delighted to welcome these riders into Team GB. Equestrian was able to deliver Team GB a medal of each colour in Athens and the experience in this team and their recent results bode well for success in Beijing. I wish the riders well in their final preparations for the Olympic Games."

Will Connell, British Equestrian Team Leader:

"Whilst there have been a number of athletes and horses in contention for selection to the Eventing Team, the five riders and horses that the selectors have decided on represent a mix of experience and youth. The Team includes athletes who have medalled at Olympic, World and European level, so this is an exciting proposition for the Games.

The athletes and team staff, under the direction of Yogi Breisner, will now focus on preparing the horses to peak on 9th August, when the Eventing competition starts in Hong Kong. The support of UK Sport lottery funding and the BOA will make this detailed preparation possible. As always, we are extremely grateful for the support of the owners of the horses selected to represent Team GB."

Yogi Breisner, British Equestrian Team Manager

"As the team manager I am fortunate to have five such talented riders on the team, and I am very grateful to all the owners for making such excellent horses available."

The selectors also named two groups of reserves who are:

1st Reserves (in alphabetical order)

Kristina Cook (Miner's Frolic)

Daisy Dick (Hope Street or Spring Along)

Ruth Edge (Two Thyme)

Oliver Townend (Flint Curtis)

2nd Reserves (in alphabetical order)

Georgie Davies (Fachoudette)

Pippa Funnell (Ensign)

Rodney Powell (Zin Zan II)

Polly Stockton (Tom Quigley)

Oliver Townend (Coup de Cour)

Nicola Wilson (Opposition Buzz)

For more information on the team see [here](#).

Ponies Take Victory in Moorsele Show Jumping Nations Cup 2008-05-13

Britain's ponies took victory in yesterday's Nations Cup in Moorsele in Belgium, finishing with a fence in hand over the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Denmark who all shared second place.

Sixteen year-old Jessie Drea from Horsham, West Sussex riding Lynne Humphries' nine year-old bay gelding Quantum Light jumped a foot perfect first round and lowered just a single pole for four faults in the second. Fifteen year-old Carian Scudamore from Cardigan, Dyfed with Nigel Scudamore's twelve year-old dun gelding Cappagh Supreme had reverse fortunes, finishing the first round with just one fence on the floor and jumping a clear in the second. Fifteen year-old George Whitaker from Huddersfield, West Yorkshire riding Colour Of Money, a ten year-old coloured gelding owned by Christopher McSharry jumped two superb clear rounds and fifteen year-old Emma Stoker from Goole, North Humberside, who was only required to jump the first round with Sarah Stoker's eleven year-old bay gelding Peron III, finished on just four faults.

CSIOP Moorsele BEL

Nations Cup

1st Great Britain 8 penalties

Jessie Drea/Quantum Light 0/4

Carian Scudamore/Cappagh Supreme 4/0

George Whitaker/Colour of Money 0/0
Emma Stoker/Peron III 4/np

=2nd The Netherlands 12 penalties
=2nd France 12 penalties
=2nd Belgium 12 penalties
=2nd Denmark 12 penalties

The Pony Team is sponsored by John Whitaker International who has sponsored the squad since 2004. The Whitaker family firmly believe in the training and producing of riders that will become future champions for Great Britain. The John Whitaker International Signature range of equestrian products have been developed and worn by riding professionals. With national pride, John Whitaker International is proud to sponsor the Pony squad.

The Pony Team is kindly supported by the World Class Development Programme who are Lottery funded through UK Sport.

Mary Contests Saumur with King's Sisters 2008-05-14

Held in the heart of the Loire Valley, Saumur CCI*** will host sixty five horses, from seventeen nations over 15 – 18 May and this year it will be the final chance for some horse and rider combinations to secure Olympic qualification and a ticket to Hong Kong.

Eleven combinations will represent Great Britain, headed by Mary King, who has recently been selected to compete at the Olympic Games in Hong Kong and is a previous winner of the event back in 1997, with King Solomon III. This year she rides two home-bred mares, who are full sisters, Kings Fancy, who was 12th at Boekelo last year and Kings Gem, who was 16th at Blenheim.

Joining Mary is the runner up from the Chatsworth World Cup and Olympic reserve, Pippa Funnell. She rides Blue Horizon, who was third at Compiègne in the spring, and Chamrock, whose last three day event was fifth place at Punchestown CCI*** in 2006 and is returning to top flight eventing following injury.

Both Mary and Pippa are supported by the UK Sport and The World Class Performance Programme. Georgie Davies, another Olympic reserve, and Laurence Hunt are two other World Class riders competing at Saumur.

Strong competition will come from Australia and New Zealand as Andrew Hoy has re-routed Moonfleet to Saumur, following his fall at Badminton, and Mark Todd makes his return to CCI*** level, in an attempt to qualify for the Olympics, aboard Gandalf.

See below for the full British contingent:

Venetia Chamberlen (39) from Farnham, Surrey
Ivor Mission
Bay, Gelding, 16.1hh, 14yrs
Sire: Ardent Ivor
Owner: Robin Patrick

Julia Crowson (33) from Marlborough, Wilts
Sonic Boom
Bay, Gelding, 16.1hh, 9yrs
Sire: Pulsingh
Owner: Robin Dunlop

Georgie Davies (25) from Hemel Hempstead, Herts
Hugo's There III
Bay, Gelding, 16.1hh, 12 yrs
Sire: Statesman Magna
Owner: Irene Graham

Pippa Funnell (39) from Dorking, Surrey
Blue Horizon
Brown, Gelding, 16.2hh, 12yrs
Sire: Skyliner
Owner: Janet McIntyre

&
Chamrock
Bay, Gelding, 16.0hh, 12yrs
Sire: Rock King
Owner: Sarah Johnstone

Laurence Hunt (29) from Ashby Magna, Leics
Phoebus
Brown, Gelding, 16.2hh, 12yrs
Sire: Blaze O Gold
Owner: Alan Hunt

Mary King (46) from Sidmouth, Devon
Kings Fancy
Bay, Mare, 16.3hh, 10yrs
Sire: Rock King
Owner: Gillian Robinson and Hazel Fastnedge

&
Kings Gem
Chestnut, Mare, 16.1hh, 9 yrs
Sire: Rock King
Owner: Rider

Marie Ryan (39) from Abergavenny, Mons
Sparrow Hall
Chestnut, Gelding, 16.2hh, 16 yrs
Sire: Unknown
Owner: Jenny Sleet & Rider

Laura Shears (22) from Pillerton Priors, Warks
Wulstan Rock On
Liv Chest, Mare, 16.1hh, 10 yrs
Sire: Rock King
Owner: Rider

Nick Turner (45) from Bedford, Beds
Rongotai
Bay, Gelding, 16.0hh, 16yrs
Sire: Cache of Gold
Owner: Barbara Cassani, John Steans & Rider

For event information and up to date results please see www.saumur.org

Spotlight on: Yogi Breisner **2008-05-20**

Welcome to the first in our series of 'Spotlight on' news items where we introduce you to different members of the Team GBR staff. Over the coming months you can find out more about the Team behind Team GBR from Team managers, to medical staff, to vets, to farriers and many more.

Yogi Breisner

Yogi Breisner - World Class Performance Manager and chef d'equipe to the senior British eventing team – is undoubtedly the right man for the job.

One of the country's most successful and respected trainers of both horses and riders, Yogi was appointed British Eventing Team Leader in December 1999 and British Eventing's national coach in 2000. Since then, under his guidance, Britain's Eventing team have won a staggering eight gold, six silver and three bronze medals. So you could say the results speak for themselves.

Background

Yogi grew up around horses, competing successfully in dressage, show jumping, horse trials and point-to-points in Sweden, Ireland and the UK. He went on to train under Lars Sederholm and was a member of the Swedish Eventing team, winning European team gold in 1983. He was ranked in the top ten of the world three-day event riders for four years, notching up four placings at Badminton Horse Trials. Today, he splits his time between his role with British Eventing and National Hunt racing – where he helps train both jockeys and horses.

His Role

The role of World Class Performance manager and chef d'equipe to the senior British Eventing team essentially means Yogi is responsible for managing the senior team programme and logistics, acting as the team manager and captain. He also helps co-ordinate the four eventing teams from Pony to Senior, providing him with a great insight into up and coming talent.

Managing people is a crucial part of his job, as he explains, 'what's really essential is that you can get the best out of people. I need to nurture confidence in each of the individuals and encourage them to work together, so that the team gels and performs to its best. It's a bit like being a cox in a boat.'

Yogi has an excellent rapport with the World Class squad, many of whom he has worked with since he started the role eight years ago. 'Unlike some other sports, eventing athletes careers are often a lot longer - which is demonstrated in our team for this year's Olympics with an age range that spans some 20 years - so I have the opportunity to watch the riders develop over time.'

He describes his job as 'the best in world, I'm so privileged to work with a range of professionals – riders, grooms, vets and other support staff who are outstanding in what they do.'

Sha Tin

Yogi made the trip out to Hong Kong and to the Olympic venue Sha Tin as part of the Good Luck Beijing 10th Anniversary Cup CCI2* (the 'Test Event'). He took on board a number of small findings from the event, but most importantly was assured that all the necessary preparation had been put in place.

'The venue is great and is very workable, but we need to remember that the Olympics are always a challenge and the hot and humid climate and travelling will add to the pressure. We need to be prepared to adjust in case of any unforeseen circumstances – horses are highly unpredictable.'

'But this shouldn't affect us feeling confident that we are as fully prepared as we can be, it will also be great to have Mary and William on the team who are previous Olympians and have competed in similar conditions.'

Preparation

Despite the fact the team was only selected this month, Yogi explains that preparation started a lot earlier – in fact as far back at the last Olympics. 'We have been focusing on this Olympics since Athens and I believe we are more prepared than ever.'

The riders have their own individual fitness programmes and will make the use of heat chambers as part of their acclimatisation. Horses have been closely monitored and with selection now complete, will be analysed regularly to ensure optimum health and fitness.'

The team of five horses and riders will go into quarantine in July, together with three or four reserve combinations who undergo the same training and procedures, so they are fully prepared to take up a place if needs be.

Medal aspirations

Having helped produce such successful teams in the past has certainly added to the pressure Yogi faces in the run up to this year's Games. However, he remains calm and quietly confident about their performance.

'We know our preparation is as good as it could be, better than ever before, and we're out to win Gold. We know the margins are razor thin and that one little mistake could cost us the competition, but we're not thinking about our competitors. We're remaining focused on our performance and on trying to ensure that we bring home medals - again.'

Eventing Squad Announced for Pony European Championships 2008-05-22

Following a very competitive Charles Owen British Pony Championships in its new location at Chepstow in Monmouthshire last weekend, the Pony Selectors are delighted to announce the Derby House Pony Squad of five for this year's European Championships at Avenches, Switzerland July 24 - 27 2008.

Newly crowned British Champions Gina Ruck and Ice Cool Bailey head the list. The combination had a good start to the season, only being out of the top three on one occasion. Lying second after the dressage at Chepstow, they put in a superb double clear, inside the time, to lift the title and secure a place on the squad. Gina and Bailey were members of the team that took Gold in Freudenberg in 2007.

The remaining four places are occupied by squad debutantes. Chepstow runners-up, Althea Bleekman and Nightgirl 002 capitalised on their Necarne win last year and fill one of the slots. Ella McEwen, sister of last year's Gold medal winner Tom, takes the third spot with her own Catherston Nutsafe. The

squad is completed by the 2007 reserve combination Helen Dunning riding Glenayre Bay Surf and Eliza Stoddart riding Killacorran Blue.

Riding as reserve will be Lottie Kennedy with Darraks Tonto, the individual combination from the 2007 Championships.

Squad Details

Althea Bleekman (16) and Nightgirl 002

Helen Dunning (15) and Bay Surf

Ella McEwen (14) and Catherston Nutsafe

Gina Ruck (15) and Ice Cool Bailey

Eliza Stoddart (15) and Killacorran Blue

Reserve Rider

Lottie Kennedy (15) and Darraks Tonto

Spotlight On: Richard Davison **2008-05-22**

Next in our series, the Spotlight falls on Richard Davison, Team Captain for the British Dressage team.

Richard Davison

It's clear to understand, given his impressive CV, why Richard Davison was picked at the start of this year to be Team Captain for the British Dressage team at this year's Olympics. An accomplished horseman and highly successful International dressage rider, with a host of impressive awards and honours, together with a natural flair for communication – he's an obvious choice for the job.

Background

Richard grew up with horses in his blood, and quickly took to riding and competing in various disciplines. He was a keen member of his local Pony Club, who he is quick to thank for his grounding in terms of essential horse management.

But Richard's career path wasn't carved out for horses from an early age. Instead at 18 he joined his father's marketing business. Despite learning a great deal, Richard's heart wasn't in the job but rather with the horses, so he made the decision to take up riding professionally. 'I don't regret the time I spent working for my father, as I learnt so much that has helped me out later in life. I'm now in the business of horses and the time spent with my father's company has helped me enormously in terms of handling sponsorship, cost management, overheads and marketing.'

Richard left his father's company to take up equestrianism professionally and it quickly became apparent he had a special talent for dressage. 'People would ask me to ride their horses and would comment on how well they would go for me. I was lulled into thinking that I had mastered the art of dressage almost as soon as I had begun – I was getting a bit of a reputation for my dressage skills, and so I decided to pursue them further.'

Richard did this by attending a dressage course at Stoneleigh, run by Barbara Slane-Fleming, which as he describes was a real crossroads. 'This course was a real shock to me I realised very quickly that far from being any good, I hadn't even mastered the basics. There was so much to take in, all this new terminology and complicated exercises. I was a complete novice and had a mountain to climb.'

Despite his inauspicious start, Barbara took Richard under her wing, helping to train him, before he went on to spend some ten years visiting the Spanish Riding School, in Vienna.

Following his extended schooling, back in the UK Richard began his competitive career winning two European medals, representing Great Britain at three Olympics and two World Championships, as well as being the British Number 1 International Dressage Rider for six years. And his competitive career isn't over, Richard regularly competes up to Grand Prix level and has a horse aimed for the 2012 Olympics.

Team Captain

Although Richard's relatively new to the role of Team Captain, he's quickly settled into the position, helped of course by his past Olympic experience and knowledge of the World Class Performance Programme and his affinity with many of the current riders (whom he has competed with). He also took advice from Yogi Breisner, British Eventing Team Leader, whose support Richard is quick to acknowledge.

His first task involved looking at each of the individual Team member's roles (from the riders to the farrier), clarifying who was responsible for what and then making sure everyone had clearly defined responsibilities.

'We have a really enthusiastic and skilful team of riders and support staff. The challenge has been defining this team's structure and outlining individual responsibilities. For dressage riders this is especially hard as they train and

compete on their own – they have their own meticulously managed units, so learning to work and take instruction from anyone outside of that is not as comfortable for them.

'As a fellow rider I understand that, but as Team Captain I need to demonstrate that the riders and their core team can be successful working in harmony with the British Dressage Team, so long as we work together. I've likened it to Formula One racing and the pit stop – we all need to know exactly who is responsible for what to ensure an efficient and effective performance - nothing can be left to chance and we have to practice working together efficiently.'

Sha Tin

Richard travelled out to the Good Luck Beijing 10th Anniversary Cup CCI2* (the 'Test Event') in Hong Kong last year to trial the Olympic facilities and gain learnings for the 'real' event in 2008.

This trip reassured him about the facilities which he describes as 'outstanding' commenting that the Olympic horse parks seem to get better and better.

'We need to respect the climate, obviously we have to work with it and make sure that we are fully prepared for it and for the worst it can throw at us. Fitness, for the horses and the riders, is also as key for dressage as it is for say eventing. Therefore, we will be leaving no stone unturned to ensure all of our athletes (equine and human) perform to their optimum.'

As part of this preparation, all the riders are working with a personal fitness trainer and will use heat chambers to help with acclimatisation. The horses' fitness preparation also includes adapting to a shorter warm up preparation (warming up the horse sufficiently, but still leaving enough fuel in the tank), together with riding in similar venue conditions, for example late at night, and under floodlights etc.

Countdown to the Games

With the Olympics just a few months away and selection just a matter of weeks away, it's a critical time for horse and rider combinations. Over the last 12 months, riders and horses scoring above 70% at Grand Prix will have been 'ear marked' by Richard who will put forward some five or so combinations to the group of selectors. It's their difficult job to then decide which four (including a reserve) will go to Hong Kong.

Then with the team chosen, it's a case of keeping riders and horses sound through the run up and into quarantine, having a safe trip out to Hong Kong, settling into the Olympic venue, Sha Tin, and competing to their best – all under the careful guidance of Richard.

Richard though remains confident and says, 'If everything goes our way we have an outside chance of the bronze medal and that's what we are aiming for. It's achievable, it's exciting –but it's going to be one hell of a challenge. But then that's the magic of the Olympics.'

Spotlight on: Will Connell

2008-05-22

Continuing our 'Spotlight On' series, we interview Team Leader for the Equestrian Teams at 2008 Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games, Will Connell.

Will Connell

The Performance Director for the British Equestrian Federation's (BEF) World Class Programme, nice title, but what does it mean? In a nutshell it means; talent identification, maximising potential and delivering success. It's a full time job, which carries an enormous amount of responsibility, and demands an in depth knowledge of all things equestrian, as well as honed people, organisational, communication and management skills.

The World Class Programme

Will Connell was appointed to the position of Performance Director for the BEF in October 2003 and has the responsibility for the co-ordination and delivery of the UK Sport funded (Lottery & Exchequer) Equestrian World Class Programme. The programme, launched prior to the Sydney Olympics in 2000, covers the 3 Olympic disciplines: Eventing, Dressage, Show Jumping and the Paralympic discipline of Para-Equestrian Dressage and has the stated objective of winning more medals for Great Britain on the international stage.

The programme is focused on identifying the most talented athletes, both human and equine, in the UK. Finding, nurturing, training and keeping two world class athletes 'sound' is of course a massive challenge and Will and his team have to ensure that the Programme plan develops to meet these needs. However, UK Sport funding does not extend to cover costs for purchasing and producing horses and without the generosity of owners; Team GBR simply could not exist.

To ensure success and a tailored approach, Will, primarily through the Performance Managers works hand in hand with three of the BEF's member bodies British Eventing, British Dressage (including Para-Equestrian Dressage) and the British Show Jumping Association – ensuring that the training and competition programmes of these disciplines are coordinated with that of the World Class Programme.

Will's background

Will is no stranger to the equestrian circuit having been involved with the sport (mainly Eventing) all his life. He spent 17 years serving with the Royal Artillery and was Commanding Officer of The King's Troop RHA – providing him with valuable organisational and management experience.

In 1997 he became chef d'equipe of the British Young Rider Eventing team working in this capacity until 2001.

As Performance Director for the BEF Will was Team Leader for the Athens Olympics and he is currently overseeing the final preparations for the 2008 Games in Hong Kong. As part of these preparations he attended the Good Luck Beijing 10th Anniversary Cup CIC2* (the 'Test Event') in Hong Kong – to trial the Olympic facilities, gain an insight into the conditions and learn valuable lessons for the 'real' event in 2008. He returned to the UK reassured about both the quality of the facilities for the horses (there is very limited space for the humans) in Hong Kong and about the Team GBR preparations at home.

Looking forward

Will and his performance assistant, Sophie George, head out to Sha Tin, Hong Kong towards the end of July to ensure everything is in place for when the team arrive. By then all of the preparation and planning will have been put in place, so the final week before the games start allows Will, Sophie and the Programme's Project Manager, Sarah Armstrong, to make any necessary final adjustments. For the duration of the Games (Olympics and Paralympics), Will remains in Hong Kong overseeing all of the Team GBR competitors, helping to support the different disciplines as required.

Having come home from Athens with an impressive medal tally (1 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze from the Olympics and 5 gold, 2 bronze from the Paralympics) Will hopes that Hong Kong also proves as fruitful for Team GBR and remains hopeful about our medal chances.

Brits take Show Jumping Victory in Rome Super League 2008-05-23

Great Britain has won the second leg of the 2008 Samsung Super League FEI Series in Rome.

Emulating last year's result, a fantastic performance from Derek Rickett's squad gave Great Britain victory at the Piazza di Siena and a vital ten Super League points.

After the first round, four faults from Michael Whitaker and Gillespie Equestrian's Suncal Portofino 63 and clears from both Tim Stockdale riding John Boshers's Fresh Direct Corlato and John Whitaker with Rebecca Stone's

Peppermill left them in equal first place with The United States of America and Ireland.

The second round saw a repeat of the first round fortunes for the Brits, however as Ireland fell by the wayside it was down to a jump off between the Brits and the United States to decide the winner.

John Whitaker was the Team Manager's choice to jump off against America's William Simpson, however a mistake in the double from the American left the pathway open for John and Peppermill, who pulled everything out of the bag to jump yet another foot perfect round to take the victory for Great Britain.

Speaking after the competition, British Team Manager Derek Ricketts said:

"This is a fantastic result, all of the horses have jumped very well. John's dependable performance in the jump off was superb and clinched us the victory here in Rome today. It's a great feeling to come back and repeat last year's win!"

Speaking from Rome Will Connell, World Class Performance Director for the British Equestrian Federation commented:

"There were some very good Teams here in Rome this afternoon, and it was great to see Great Britain pull off a memorable win in what was a very close competition".

2008 Samsung Super League with FEI Series

Round 2 - Rome, Italy

1st	Great Britain	8
	Michael Whitaker/Suncal Portofino	4/4
	Tim Stockdale/Fresh Direct Corlato	0/0
	Robert Smith/Ronaldo VI	(12)/(8)
	John Whitaker/Peppermill	0/0/0 – 44.52 secs

2nd United States of America 8 penalties (Jump Off: 4 - 34.75 secs)

3rd Germany 16 penalties

=4th Ireland 20 penalties

=4th The Netherlands 20 penalties

- 6th Italy 21 penalties
7th Belgium 24 penalties
=8th Sweden 32 penalties
=8th Switzerland 32 penalties

Full results can be downloaded at www.piazzadisiena.com.

Today's victory means Great Britain have now won the Nations Cup in Rome a total of nine times in the seventy six year history of the show (1963, 1970, 1973, 1988, 1990, 1991, 2005, 2007 and 2008).

2008 Samsung Super League with FEI Series

Standings after Round 2

1 USA - 12.33, =2 GBR - 12 & BEL - 12, 4 IRL- 8.83, 5 NED - 6.5, 6 GER - 6, 7 SUI - 5.83, 8 SWE - 1.5

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

Historic Handover Ceremony of The Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue (Sha Tin) 2008-05-26

Hong Kong's first-ever Olympic venue, the Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue (Sha Tin), was handed over by The Hong Kong Jockey Club to the organisers of the Olympic Equestrian Events - Equestrian Events (Hong Kong) of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad Company Limited (the Equestrian Company) - in a historic handover ceremony held on 26th May.

The handover ceremony was witnessed by HKSAR Chief Secretary for Administration, Henry Tang; President of the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF & OC), Timothy Fok; Chairman of the Hong Kong Paralympic Committee and Sports Association for the Physically Disabled, Jenny Fung; the Club's Deputy Chairman T Brian Stevenson; the Club's Chief Executive Officer, Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges; the Chief Executive Officer of the Equestrian Company, Lam Woon-kwong; and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Equestrian Company and Venue Manager, Miranda Chiu.

"The Hong Kong Jockey Club made the decision to build the best venues for the Olympic horses and riders to support Beijing's vision of staging the best Olympics and, even though we had less than two years to achieve it, we believe that we've more than lived up to the task", Mr Stevenson commented in his welcome address.

"The Club has invested more than HK\$1.2 billion in the Olympic equestrian venues, but we feel it is money well spent because it has been invested in Hong Kong's Olympic history, a history of which the Club is very proud to be part. This is a day for all of Hong Kong to celebrate. A day when the Club hands over the Olympic equestrian venue, ready for the final dress-up to welcome the world's best horses and riders, including our own Hong Kong and Chinese equestrian teams."

HKSAR Chief Secretary for Administration, Henry Tang, spoke at the ceremony as one of the officiating guests. "The venue has been specially designed so that it's very 'horse-friendly'. There are a number of world firsts: everything from the stables environment, training facilities, horse transport, equine sample testing, waste recycling as well as measures to combat the bad weather."

SF & OC President Timothy Fok also congratulated the Club on its work in producing the core Olympic equestrian venue at Sha Tin in less than two years. "Not only was the venue completed within such a short time, but it is also the best equestrian venue ever built", he said. "It has received praise from the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) and the International Equestrian Federation (FEI). At a recent meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Beijing, IOC President Jacques Rogge jokingly said that he wouldn't need a room when he comes to Hong Kong for the Games, "a stable will do". This was not only praise for the venues, it also demonstrated his confidence in the capability of Hong Kong people to organize the Games."

The Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue (Sha Tin) is where most of the Olympic equestrian competitions will be staged between 9 and 21 August. The all-weather surface main arena, which has hi-tech floodlighting appropriate for High Definition TV broadcasting, has grandstand seating for around 18,000 spectators, as well as the Olympic Family, athletes, media and broadcasters. The venue also includes six-star air-conditioned accommodation for the horses, a dedicated Equine Clinic and Farriery, 13 training arenas – including the first Olympic air-conditioned indoor training arena – a cross-country training track and a gallop track, as well as a bridle path for relaxation in the tranquil surrounds of Penfold Park, the in-field of Sha Tin Racecourse.

Four equine cooling stations, including misting tents and plentiful supplies of chilled water, are located around the venue to cool the Olympic horses after training or competition. Mobile cooling units, another unique feature, will also be in use throughout the Olympics and Paralympics.

The Club's Equine Hospital will also be on-call for treatment of the Olympic horses throughout the Games period, while the Club's Racing Laboratory, the only on-site equine testing facility in Olympic history, will test samples from the Olympic horses, with fastest ever turn-round promised.

Major construction work on the Sha Tin venue is now completed. The Equestrian Company will oversee the final phase, including Olympic image and look dress-up of the venue.

The Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue (Beas River), where the cross-country section of the Eventing competition will be held on 11 August, will be handed over to the Equestrian Company next month.

Have Horse will Travel **2008-05-29**

Read all about the huge logistical task of transporting more than 300 horses to compete in Hong Kong this year.

In August more than 300 horses, from around the world will make the journey to Hong Kong, including those representing Team GBR, travelling some 6000 miles across land and sea with the intention of not only competing at this year's Games but also of adding to our nation's Olympic medal tally.

The task of transporting this size of squad and the necessary back up support is potentially a logistical nightmare - one, under the stewardship of the BEF's World Class Performance Manager, Will Connell, that requires military-style precision and planning.

Enlisted to ensure that this operation runs smoothly are the world experts in horse travel; Peden Bloodstock from Hampshire. At the request of the Beijing Olympic Organising Committee they will undertake the task of transporting some 305 horses, made up of 75 Eventers, 58 Dressage, 95 Show Jumpers and 77 Para dressage horses from around the globe via five 'hub' airports in London, New York, Amsterdam, Los Angeles and Sydney to Sha Tin, the venue for the equestrian events in Hong Kong this summer.

Each horse will also travel with around 400kg of hay, feed, grooming equipment and tack; while a list of support staff including vets, physiotherapists, grooms and a full management team will also join them in Sha Tin for this far eastern Olympic adventure.

Pre-Export Quarantine

This transport operation has taken four years to plan, starting before the Athens' Games in 2004. This year the qualified horses are under such scrutiny that for 67 days prior to travel they must remain in 'scheduled

countries', the EU, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia and the USA for example. This allows Pedens and the Official vet to complete a thorough paper trail for each horse and ensure their safety and well being before departure.

In addition, for the last seven days prior to departure the Team GBR horses; comprised of five Eventers, five Show Jumpers, four Dressage and seven Para-Equestrian Dressage horses will all enter Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ). At dedicated facilities the horses will spend a week, 10 days in the case of the Para-Equestrian Dressage horses, in total isolation from any other non-competing animals. During this time, the horses will be constantly monitored under the strict supervision of the PEQ vet. They are tested constantly and not allowed within 100 metres of another, non-quarantined horse for fear of infection.

Horse travel - business class

On 30 July the Team GBR Eventing and Dressage horses will leave the UK on a Dutch registered 'Martin Air' 747 Cargo plane bound for Hong Kong. The Show Jumpers follow on 4 August. The 13 hour flight will include a brief stop in Dubai for refuelling.

Following the trip from their PEQ venue aboard disinfected lorries, the horses arrive at their designated airport around three and a half hours before departure. They are all individually weighed, to configure the weight and balance of the aircraft then transferred to the plane in Jetstalls via dollies and lifted on to the maindeck of the aircraft on a scissor lift.

Once boarded, a total of 26 horses representing various countries will travel 'business class' on this flight. This means two horses per jet stall; a self contained stable measuring 2.3m high, 2.3m wide and 1.8m in length from the back wall to the breast bar. For those wishing to upgrade, there are private 'first class' stalls for individual horses available, while there is also an 'economy class' of jet stall for three horses.

In reality though this is anything but a low budget flight and every detail of the horse's welfare is painstakingly planned for and monitored in flight. Each horse has enough hay and feed for the journey while the Team vet, who always travels in situ is on hand to provide treatment in the event of dehydration, horse colic or any other medical complication. Meanwhile, selected grooms accompany their horses and Pedens even provide professional flying grooms - equestrian air hosts and hostesses - who are in constant communication with the horses, their grooms and the in flight crew ensuring the flight for these prize equine athletes is always a smooth one.

The horses travel wearing leg protection, a guard on their tails and usually a light sheet or rug. Each aircraft is air conditioned meaning that the climactic conditions are constantly managed at around 17 degrees.

Says Henry Bullen, a director from Pedens, 'Once they are in the air, as long as there is little turbulence, the horses are fine. We don't have to drug or sedate them for travel purposes. Compared with a road journey by lorry there is no stopping, starting and constant turning, so it's actually a lot smoother. Plus most of the horses going to Hong Kong are experienced flyers.'

Even on arrival the horses are afforded first class priority treatment. The plane will dock at the Cargo terminal meaning the human passengers have to be bused through to human arrivals terminal. This priority status, enables Pedens to unload and transport the horses to their base in Sha Tin in just 90 minutes.

Says Henry; 'Through our continued experience, we are very aware of what the British Equestrian Federation require and have been working very closely with Will Connell throughout this process.

'We are also in contact with the world's airlines and the various government departments to ensure we understand the process and protocols for each country.

'Everything has been planned for, we want no last minute panics; if the people involved are stressed or nervous this can be passed on to the horses - so at all times we are calm, timely, but calm.'

Spotlight On: David Hunter

2008-05-29

Continuing our Spotlight On series, we meet David Hunter, Performance Manager to the Para-Equestrian Dressage Team.

David Hunter

You wouldn't imagine that managing a national hunt racecourse and the British Para-Equestrian Dressage team would necessarily go hand in hand, but David Hunter shows that's not the case.

As an experienced horseman, David successfully juggles running Fakenham Racecourse with his role as Performance Manager for the British Para-Equestrian Dressage Team, using his exemplary managerial skills to help achieve amazing results, which include nine medals from the last Paralympics and 13 from last year's World Championships.

Background

David spent ten years serving in the British Army as a Commissioned Officer, holding various positions including Troop Leader and Instructor at The Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst. During this time David learnt a range of practical skills, which he uses today in his role as Performance Manager.

His time in the army also introduced him to dressage. Already an accomplished horse rider and keen eventer, David's eyes were first opened to 'real dressage' while he was based at the Cours de Perfectionnement Equestre, at the Ecole National d'Equitation (ENE) in Saumur, France. It was during his 11 month stay here that David had to perform a Prix St George dressage test, which opened his eyes to the discipline.

After leaving the army David joined the ILPH (International League for the Protection of Horses) as the Director of Equine Rehabilitation and Welfare, where he had responsibility for running the 300-acre farm, 120 horses and managing 12 full-time staff.

The role

In 2002, David responded to a job advert in Horse & Hound for Performance Manager to the British Para-Equestrian Dressage Team and was quickly snapped up. As the first person to be employed in the position, David's initial responsibilities were to define the team's roles and to develop a programme they could work to.

Today, his job involves coordinating all the training, coaching and logistics required to get the Para-Equestrian Dressage riders, horses and support staff to national and international competitions. He works alongside the team's professional support staff (farriers, doctors, trainers etc), together with the associated organisation bodies - the British Paralympic Association and British Dressage - to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, helping to give the team the edge.

As a 'team leader', David's role also has a huge emphasis on people skills; motivating and managing the riders to ensure they work together, as he said: 'I'm a firm believer that team success builds individual success and not vice versa. We need to have a happy team and that's one in which everyone pulls their weight. I pride myself on my ability to manage the members to make sure they pull together.'

The team

Over the years David has got to know the riders on the squad pretty well, especially as six out of the eight riders he originally inherited are still on the Performance squad.

And despite having no experience of working with people with disabilities, David has found it easy to adapt and work with the team, as he said: 'I treat the riders the same as I would an able bodied athlete. At the end of the day, they are top class sports men and women and have responsibilities whether they have disabilities or not.

'The only difference is that I understand and appreciate their requirements, so I am able to make the necessary adaptations if needed. For example, I may

need to plan in more time for travel, extra space at a venue or check out accessibility.'

Sha Tin

Along with the other performance managers, David made the trip out to the Good Luck Beijing 10th Anniversary Cup CCI2* (the 'Test Event') in Hong Kong last year to trial the Olympic facilities and see what could be learnt ahead of this year's Games.

This experience reassured David about the facilities which he describes as 'first class', especially given the extra space the Para riders will have, due to the lower number of riders competing in the Paralympics compared to the Olympics.

'Despite the testing conditions - very high temperatures and humidity - we felt the riders and horses coped fairly well,' said David.

'Obviously for some of our riders, particularly those in wheelchairs or with special casing or clamps, the conditions will be a particular challenge. We learnt that we need to allow extra 'rest and relaxation' time, both for the riders and their carers, to ensure everyone can perform at their best.'

Countdown to the Olympics

With the Games just a couple of months away, preparation is well under way for the Paralympic hopefuls. The team of selectors will announce the team on 16 June, but until then there's still everything to play for. A squad of 17 qualified riders are on the long list and will be vying for a place on the team, competing at various domestic competitions to prove they should be one of the seven heading out to Beijing. The team of selectors, who have been keeping a close watch on the riders, will continue to monitor their progress, paying particular attention on how they cope under pressure. 'It's a particularly stressful time, especially for those riders who have new horses, so they are busy getting used to them, forming successful partnerships,' commented David.

Rider fitness is also a key part of preparation; all of the riders have their own fitness programmes and will be assessed by doctors in June to ensure they make the grade to go to the Games. Fitness of the support and care staff is also not overlooked and they too have their own fitness plans to ensure they can cope with the challenges out in Beijing.

Quarantine for the Para riders is slightly different to the other equestrian disciplines, as the riders stay with their horses on site for the duration. This provides the riders and support staff with the perfect opportunity to hone their team skills, as David points out. 'These ten days will be really useful to the team before we head out to Sha Tin. We've planned in a range of activities -

including a trip to a local Comedy Club - to run alongside the training to ensure that everyone's spirits are kept up and they're really motivated.'

During this period riders will make use of heat chambers to help with acclimatisation and horses will be carefully monitored to ensure optimum health and fitness. Reserve rider /horse combinations will also go through quarantine, but will not travel out to Beijing.

Travelling out to the Games itself will have its own demands, with a long flight for the riders. Fortunately, the team get to travel business class so have plenty of leg room, plus they have two days when they get there to adjust and relax before the competitions begin.

'We're entering the Games with high aspirations and are obviously keen to maintain our team Paralympic gold, as well as bringing back individual medals across the grades. Because the team has been so successful in the past, it's an added pressure, but I know they'll give it their best shot and produce a medal tally that we're proud of.'

Spotlight On: Derek Ricketts **2008-05-29**

Read all about the Performance Manager to the Show Jumping squad, Derek Ricketts continuing our Spotlight On series.

Derek Ricketts

In an era of flares and platforms, Derek Ricketts was sticking to his breeches and boots making a name for himself as a highly successful international show jumper. Today, he's still heavily involved with the sport -although out of the saddle - as Performance Manager for the British Show Jumping team.

Background

Derek was born into a keen equestrian family and began honing his riding skills at an early age. His flair for show jumping soon became apparent, when he won the Foxhunter Final at the Horse of the Year Show in 1967 at just 18. This was the beginning of Derek's very successful jumping career, which included winning European team gold and silver medals in 1977 and 1979 and holding an FEI gold badge for nation's cup performances. He was also a member of the last British team to win the World Championships, at Aachen in 1978, on his best known horse, Hydrophane Coldstream.

Derek retired from international competition about 15 years ago, but still regularly rides and hunts, as well as breeding competition horses.

The role

A member of the British Show Jumping Association's executive board since 1996, Derek was appointed Performance Manager to the British Show Jumping team in 2002.

Through his role, he's responsible for planning the season and managing the team, assisting with the young riders on the potential squads, as well as managing the performance and evolution squads. To help him with the increasing amounts of admin work, Derek has a part time assistant, funded by UK Sport.

Unlike Performance Managers of the other equestrian disciplines, Derek is also a selector - the sole selector for the British Show Jumping team. This is, without doubt, a huge responsibility but one which he's accepted graciously and has since proven his worth.

'The riders chose me to be their selector, which is a real honour and indicates that they value my judgement. It's not an easy part of my job and is often a bone of contention with the riders - which is understandable and unfortunately unavoidable - but it works well for the team and has got the results.'

At the last Olympics, although the British Show Jumping team failed to qualify, individually the riders all performed well and ultimately proved that selection had been right.

Countdown to the Olympics

Without specific training days allocated to the squad pre team selection, Derek keeps a close eye on Olympic prospects by attending a number of the key events throughout the year, including eight Super League competitions and ten Nations' Cups.

'The riders are still competing and will do so right up until they leave for the Games,' said Derek. 'The prize money in Show Jumping is too valuable to miss out on, both for the riders, but also for the horse's owners. Obviously, the team won't take any unnecessary risks, but there's a fine line between keeping the horses sound for the Olympics and maintaining competition fitness.'

Amidst this key competition period falls Olympic pre-export quarantine (PEQ), which could be described as a necessary evil, as selected combinations will miss out on competing at the British leg of the Super League series, while the selected horses enter a week of controlled isolation. However, those riders fortunate enough to have additional top horses are free to come and go from the quarantine site and compete on their other horses.

During the PEQ week the horses will be put through their paces - with jumping and flatwork sessions under constant supervision from the team vet to ensure

optimim health. The riders too will have their own fitness work to do, including acclimatisation preparation in heat chambers.

Sha Tin

Derek visited the Olympic equestrian venue Sha Tin, with BEF Performance Director, Will Connell earlier this year. He was impressed by the facilities as he said, 'the venue is great, compact but still workable and the arena size and surface looks good, which is crucial. In terms of the climate, it's not something we as a team are over-concerned about - many of the horses and riders have competed under similar conditions. Plus show jumping is about short bursts - three minutes or so - of power, rather than endurance, so they should cope ok.'

With the anticipation of the Games rising in the Show Jumping squad, Derek is looking forward to the event.

'Thanks to UK Sport, the team has had the best preparation possible. They are more than capable of winning a medal, and have a stronger chance than at previous Games, plus they're hungry for it and determined to succeed.'