

## Rassegna Stampa 2009

### Eventing HSBC FEI European Eventing Championships

#### Cross-country

## British brilliance, German disaster

The Germans have a hideous time over the challenging cross-country course, but Britain pull further ahead with Tina Cook's masterful round keeping her in individual gold position

RENOWNED French designer Pierre Michelet's course ran on twisting tracks through woods, with fences four to 11 on an open grass plain, and the last obstacles in the main arena. Everyone predicted that the time would be tight and there were multiple opportunities for a silly mistake. "You've got to concentrate totally from start to finish," said Frank Osthoit.

Lucy Wiegiersma pointed out that even the straightforward fences were sited on a turn or undulation, while Oliver Townend concluded: "I think the course is more serious than people are making out." He was right.

The inconsistent ground was also a worry, ranging from firm grass to potentially deep sand. But the organisers had worked hard to improve it, and although it wasn't ideal, at least the tracks didn't become deeper as the day went on, as some had feared.

The optimum time was 10min 27sec and, with Germany and Britain both sending out their fastest cross-country horses first, it didn't take long to prove that it was achievable. But neither did it take long to realise that it wasn't easy just because Michael Jung (La Biosthetique-Sam FBW) and Nicola Wilson (Opposition Buzz) managed to beat it.

"I regretted having him in a snaffle as he took a strong hold today, which he doesn't normally," said Nicola. "When he's allowed to go cross-country it's like all his birthdays and Christmases have come at once. Clear in the time were my instructions, and thank goodness I did it."

The less strong nations were soon racking up penalties, and some of the French individuals struggled — Karim Laghouag was lucky to walk away from a horrible fall after Havenir D'Azac fought him approaching fence 25, a

William Fox-Pitt said, 'Don't look pretty, look ugly, be effective' and I could hear him ringing in my ears when I was going round some corners where I'd have liked to slow down

Tina Cook on advice from her team-mate



TEAM PLACINGS AFTER CROSS-COUNTRY

- 1st Britain
- 2nd France
- 3rd Italy

INDIVIDUAL PLACINGS

- 1st Tina Cook (GB)
- 2nd Michael Jung (GER)
- 3rd William Fox-Pitt (GB)

flowerbed in the main arena.

In the second run of team riders, Frank Osthoit and Air Jordan 2 looked on top form until the horse ran out at the tricky corner after a wide table at fence 22. Two further stops at the final water (fence 24) — a drop followed by two skinnies on a curving line — and suddenly Germany had lost a rider and the team contest was hotting up.

William Fox-Pitt recorded a second good score for Britain by adding just 3.6 time-penalties on Idalgo. He explained he was up on his minute-markers at fence 22, but having lost his reins jumping into the last water, he had to regroup before the final skinny.

"He was totally unsuited to that track — he's too big for all those twists, but he was generous and on his lines," said William.

Meanwhile, the French had recorded two completions from Cedric Lyard (Jessy Mail) and Eric Vigeaneil (Coronado Prior). Their spirits were boosted when individual Didier Dhennin (Ismene Du Temple) recorded the third — and in the event, final — clear inside the time for seventh overnight. And fellow individual Arnaud Boiteau added just six time-penalties on the 17-year-old Expo Du Moulin to take fifth.

"Last year he had a few stops, and I thought that was the end of competition for him, but this year

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Clear in the time were my instructions  
and thank goodness I did it  
Nicola Wilson, a superb pathfinder for Britain

William Fox-Pitt jumps through the water on the way to recording a valuable clear for Britain on Idalgo. William has been on the team for six of Britain's eight consecutive team golds at Europeans

Nicola Wilson fulfills all expectations of her as British trailblazer, coming home clear and inside the time on Opposition Buzz

he's gone very well," said Arnaud. Germany's misery continued when individual Dirk Schrade, eighth after dressage, was thrown over Gadget De La Cere's head when he stopped at the skinny out of the second water. Worse was to come when their third team rider, Ingrid Klimke, retired FRH Butts Abraxas. He launched over the first of the two acutely angled hedges at fence 11 — numerically the most influential obstacle with 12 faulters — and couldn't take on the second. He then ran out at the angled hedge off a bank (fence 16). The German challenge had evaporated. Tina Cook was already on course with Miners Frolic, and the

Italian anchorman Roberto Rotatori adds a team silver medal to his fourth place at Badminton in the spring

Comment  
**Ginny Elliot**  
Top-class course design  
FROM the moment I saw it, I thought Pierre Michelet had produced a completely brilliant cross-country course. For the first time in a long time riders were challenged to commit to the quick way or the long way; there was barely any scope for changing tack after the first element. The slow routes were very slow and very kind — and that's how it should be. And this actually gave riders more confidence — they had to make a decision about their route and go with it. Trouble came everywhere, and it was one of the most exciting competitions I've been to. The undulations demanded fitness — perhaps some riders didn't realise quite how much — and a very balanced horse ridden in control, just as the show jumping did. If you didn't have it, you didn't get away with it — and that promotes good cross-country riding. Nicola Wilson deserves so much credit as a brilliant British pathfinder and was building her rhythm all the way round in a way that some other riders failed to. People are describing Opposition Buzz as "the next Over To You" and, funnily enough, he's a similar horse to watch in terms of his attitude and style of jumping. Tina was absolute class and finished in the same rhythm that she set off in. Miners Frolic was in complete balance throughout. Tina may have discarded all thoughts of "looking pretty", but hers was the smoothest round of the day for me, and it never feels as good as it looks. Piggy French had a cracking round on Some Day Soon — that is pressure, riding over a track like that on a fairly new horse. You have to feel excited by the performances of some of the younger British horses — and go home with your tail wagging. I had to pity defending champion Nicolas Touzaint, eliminated for jumping the wrong side of a flag. Our sport is so unforgiving sometimes. The luck wasn't with him, just as it wasn't with the Irish. But his time will come again — and so will theirs.

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