



**N**ICOLAS Touzaint and Galan De Sauvage continued their relentless victory roll on the way to becoming one of the all-time greats of the sport when they notched up their second European Championship title, at Pratoni del Vivaro last weekend.

The elegant grey and his 27-year-old jockey's performance couldn't have been more perfect and by becoming the only dressage score finishers out of a start list of 64 they held the cream of European eventing at bay, including two other former European Champions. As if to frank their brilliance, their final score – 29.4 – was the best ever recorded at a championship event.



above Daisy Dick, Zara Phillips, Oliver Townend and Mary King with their gold medals

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## EUROPEANCHAMPIONSHIPSREPORT



above Bettina Hoy and Ringwood Cockatoo take the individual bronze after notching up four show jumping faults



above Daisy Dick and Spring Along, seventh, enter the water during their round which was one of the fastest of the day



above Jean Teulere and Espoir De La Mare, fourth, leap over the Viewpoint (21)



above Italy's Vittoria Panizzon and Rock Model, eighth and team bronze medallists, leap through the European Flag (15)

In attempting to defend her 2005 title, Zara Phillips shadowed Nicolas all the way to the wire, but her challenge as she lay in silver position fell apart in the show jumping, as it has done on this horse before. A refusal, together with two fences down, including the one Toytown had already demolished when he stopped, left Zara with an unwelcome 19 penalties and sixth place.

"I was a bit backward to the upright and had to move to the oxer. I thought I had a good shot at it, but it felt like he took off and then put down in the middle of the fence," Zara explained.

She was in tears as she exited the arena, but could take consolation in the fact that Great Britain had secured team gold for an unprecedented seventh time, and by the massive margin of 66.9 points.

GB's winning run had begun back in 1995 at this very venue. In those days of long-format, Mary King had been a member of that victorious quartet. This time she got the closest she has ever come to an individual title when securing the silver medal aboard Call Again Cavalier, a horse she rates as the best in a long line of talented equines.

"He's so talented in all three phases," said Mary, who confessed that winning an individual medal hadn't been on her mind. "All the others I have ridden have had a weakness in one phase or another."



best of the Belgians, Jolly Hope De Treille, ninth, who lay 11 seconds after the first day of dressage

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above France's Cedric Lyard and Jolly Hope De Treille, fifth, at Oaks' Roots

Thirty-one horses came before the ground jury on the first day to be scrutinised by GB's Sue Stewart, Italy's Katherine Lucheschi and ground jury president, Germany's Christoph Hess. The latter's assessment of certain movements didn't always concur with his fellow judges – he awarded Beeke Kaack and Sinjang 2.10 per cent more for some parts of their test and Flint Curtis 10 per cent less and there were plenty of other examples showing even more disparity.

But the trio did agree that Ingrid's performance had been the best, followed, 10 points in arrears, by Belgium's Joris van Springel (Bold Action), and Tiziana Realini and Gamour for Switzerland.

Spring Along was fourth. The tranquil Pratoni brought out the best in Daisy Dick's mount, who made a couple of minor mistakes for 42.3. Flint Curtis notched up 44.2, which prompted his jockey, Oliver Townend, to say: "We all know what he can do, but it was nice for him not to do it here!"

The team scores showed Germany leading with 79, GB in second on 86.5 and Italy third, 0.8 of a point ahead of France.

Friday brought on Ringwood Cockatoo. He stole show as well as the lead from Butts Abraxas when he gained his best ever championship score – 27.1, which included a perfect 10 from Katherine Lucheschi for his entry and halt.

British individual Georgie Davies clocked up 45.4 with Fachoudette, who was scoring eight until a break in the extended trot prompted Georgie to ask for less expression.

Zara Phillips worked in Toytown under the watchful gaze of Tracie Robinson in a quiet area away from the glare of the media, going straight into the main arena. Toytown broke into canter on the first turn, but the overall picture earned 29.8 and left her in third.

"He was a bit tense on entry, which is why my corner wasn't very good," she said.

Britain's second individual, Rodney Powell, got off to a promising start by scoring 47.5 on Langarth Darcy.

Karin Donckers (Gazelle De La Brasserie CH) joined her teammate Joris van Springel in the top 10, with Jean Teulere and Espoir De La Mare slotting into ninth.

### FASCINATING FACTS



above Beeke Kaack in his dressage test uniform

above Italian horse Rayarron escapes before his dressage test right Sara Algotsson hobbles around the course after breaking her foot the day before the competition began far right Tiziana Realini and Gamour wow the dressage judges



■ WITH two qualification slots available for Hong Kong the competition was given an extra dimension. In the end, the silver medal-winning French gained their ticket, along with the third-placed Italians.

■ THE Swedish team was reduced to three members when Sara Algotsson fell over on Wednesday night, breaking a bone in her foot. She was forced, with her foot in plaster, to witness the remaining trio decimated by the cross-country.

■ DENMARK'S Peter Flarup was not only able to celebrate a top 20 placing with Silver Ray, but he also became a father on show jumping day.

■ GABRIELE Savoini, one of 12 Italian riders in the competition, earned one of the worst marks on Thursday with Rayarron. This may have been due to the grey being wound up by his gallop around the warm-up area. He had escaped from his handlers as they were taking off his bandages only moments before he was due to go into the arena.

■ INGRID Klimke's FRH Butts Abraxas, along with a number of other horses bred by Frederich Butt, was given the prefix to his name upon his breeder's death. Abraxas' dam, Annabel, was competed up to intermediate level by Andreas Dibowski, who also piloted Annabel's full sister Andora around Burghley in 1997.

■ SWITZERLAND's day one dressage star Tiziana Realini, 23, a former Young Rider, combines competing with studying sport at university. She confessed that dressage is usually her Swiss-bred horse Gamour CH's weakest

phase, but credited her change of fortune to "lots of hard work and Parelli".

■ THE piped music on the two days of dressage proved a big talking point. Zara Phillips performed to the rousing Rule Britannia and Land of Hope and Glory. Queen played during Rodney Powell's test; the Charleston rung towards the end of Call Again Cavalier's performance, while Austin O'Connor and Hobby Du Mee were 'serenaded' by traditional Irish music.

■ LANGARTH Darcy, 40th, was produced by Lizel Witter and taken over by Rodney Powell last August. "Lizel's done all the work and I've had all the glory," laughed Rodney.

■ COURSE-designer Giuseppe Della Chiesa has, to date, designed few tracks outside his native Italy. It was his course that was jumped at the final Windsor CCI\*, but otherwise his constructions have largely graced the hills of Pratoni del Vivaro, including for the 2005 Junior Europeans.

■ THE two Russian horses who completed the competition were both stallions. The eight-year-old bay Fabry, who finished 30th with Andrey Korshunov, was sired by a stallion with the unattractive name of Fart.

■ GERMAN individual Beeke Kaack, 11th, is a member of the German airforce, which funds her. She doesn't work for them, though, but runs a yard in Schmaleuse, northern Germany. Beeke is a member of Germany's Potential group. She took on the 12-year-old Thoroughbred/Holsteiner Sinjang 2, by Shostakovich XX, six years ago, buying him out of a show jumping yard.

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above Ingrid Klimke and FRH Butts Abraxas splash through the first water during a round marred by a stop at the Rifle Range

Bettina Hoy arrived at Friday's press conference assuming that the last rider of the competition, Nicolas Touzaint, had overtaken her lead.

"Oh am I still in first?" questioned Bettina, whose advantage had now shrunk to little more than two points.

Three German team members – Frank Ostholt (Air Jordan) and Hinrich Romeike (Marius Voigt-Logistik), as well as Ingrid – lay in the top eight, with the same number of Brits in the leading 12 – Call Again Cavalier and Spring Along, along with Toytown. But Germany's team score of 102.3 was only 6.3 points less than Britain's and the scene was set for a furious battle.

### Class acts rise to the occasion

Giuseppe Della Chiesa's first senior championship course earned plaudits as well as massive respect from competitors. Riders called it a true championship track and said their concerns lay "from the first fence to the last". With 27 obstacles built over energy-sapping hilly terrain, the optimum time of 10min 34sec over a 6,020m track was bound to make or break dreams, and into this cocktail of demands mother nature had thrown the hottest day so far.

Russia's Pavel Sergeev kicked off the action aboard Galofit, but their campaign ended at fence 16, Oaks' Roots, two massive

tree trunks followed by a ditch, where Pavel fell off. In what became a forgettable day for this often-luckless squad, only two of their five members completed.

Ingrid Klimke and Butts Abraxas looked in a different class, but they crossed the finish line having added 20 penalties for a run-out at the notorious Rifle Range (11). This famous test, which has featured frequently at Pratoni in a variety of forms, consisted of an

a/b part log, followed by an alarming descent down a near-precipice, at the bottom of which, on more level ground, two skinny bullfinches took the question of accuracy and balance to the limit.

Abraxas ducked out to the right at the second brush, as did a number of horses who followed, including Flint Curtis, second out for the British team, who had hit the first element hard but with momentum taking him forward so rapidly time ran out to steer towards an alternative.

Spring Along cheered the British camp with a fast clear round. Following team orders they went long at number 9, a three-part combination boasting a massive flower-topped skinny as its central element and an impossible-looking corner for the third.



above Oliver Townend and Flint Curtis, team gold medallists, leap over the first of the three-part flower bed complex at number 9

Daisy bypassed the latter, instead turning back to take the safer and much wider flower box. However, she enjoyed a successful passage through number 11, Spring Along locking on like an Exocet missile, never veering away from his target at the bottom of the hill.

But Daisy, who came home with only 2.8 faults to add, did admit: "I could see his ears going from side to side and I wasn't sure he was going to take it on, but guts and determination got him over."

As horse after horse took on this complex anyone who risked the straight way suffered a glance-off. Georgie Davies was the one other to pull it off, but her

daring came to nothing when Fachoudette uncharacteristically began to hit fences around the half-way point. Her below par jumping led to a stop at fence 20, the Left or Right two-part trakehner sited on a tight right-hand curve, and then another at influential number 24, the Roller Coaster, a three-element question consisting of a log to a skinny to a second log on an angled line.

Fence 24 was the scene of a stop for Langarth Darcy, who had also been unwilling

**'I first came to Pratoni twelve years ago to collect autographs. It's been very exciting to come here and compete against some of those riders'**  
**VITTORIA PANIZZON**

**'It's exciting to be on the team with three of the best looking girls in Europe'**  
**OLIVER TOWNEND**

have been travelling home with her own bronze medal.

**Squad first timer leads the way**  
Pratoni may have been a big ask for a championship first-timer like FRH Butts Abraxas, winner of the Strzegom CCI\*\*\*, but Ingrid Klimke's pedigree and prowess on the flat is legendary. Her supporters stopped and watched at 10am on the first day of dressage when it became apparent that it was not for nothing that Ingrid had been promoted

from first reserve to team member after Dirk Schrade's Gadget De La Cere had gone lame.

Ingrid's faith in her potential future star, whom she terms her "good mood" horse, was justified,

and he performed a soft and accurate test to capture the lead.

"He made a couple of mistakes, but he learns well," said Ingrid.

Italian-style informality was the order of the day and there were few distractions to spark bad behaviour. Spectators filled only half the stands, small groups of supporters raised their country's flags at appropriate moments, piped music played, trees rustled in a moderate breeze and the action took place under a cloudless sky.

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