

Phillips gallops to gold

Zara Phillips and Toytown battle the worst of the weather to come home inside the optimum time and take the overnight lead



“When I hear “double gold medalist”, it sounds like a dream. Toytown was fantastic. I’ll never get another one like him”

Zara Phillips

in Mum’s footsteps

A solid team score would have been a noteworthy debut. But spurning such mediocrity, she produces a cross-country round that is a perfect example of equine and human partnership, becoming European Champion at just 24 years old. Martha Terry reports on a weekend that belongs to Zara Phillips



William Fox-Pitt (Tamarillo) flies the corner at fence 10 to claim an individual silver medal and his fifth team gold

EVENTING



British team members Leslie Law and Shear L'Eau go clear across country. Leslie cut his face when he was flung on to the horse's neck landing at fence 19 and later joked, "The horse tried to fall, so I headbuted him"

It wasn't until the following afternoon that anyone troubled this top three, when Zara Phillips and Toytown shot into third on 38pen. Apart from a small blip in the rein-back, this was an assured performance. Only Frank Ostholt, the reigning German champion, could match them, sharing third place on Air Jordan.

Ostholt's mark commented Germany's lead (11.17pen) in the team competition, with her third score to count being Hinrich Romeike's 10th place on Marius Voigt-Logistik, who was fifth in Athens. Britain lay in silver-medal position, 12.2pen behind, with both Leslie Law (Shear L'Eau) and William Fox-Pitt (Tamarillo) posting consistent marks to take 11th and 12th.

France was close-up in third — thanks to Arnaud Boiteau's seventh placing on Expo Du Moulin. And other than the leading nations, Italian carabinieri rider Susanna Bordone's smart display on her nine-year-old mare Carmen (16pen) put her sixth, while Belgium's Karin Donckers (Gormley) was ninth.

Cross-country SEVERAL experts expressed concerns that Mike Etherington-Smith's track would not be taxing enough to alter the dressage order, and when

EVENTING

CHAMPIONSHIP CHAT

■ DAISY DICK's excellent dressage test put her in the top half before cross-country, but her noseband nearly scuppered her chances. The FEI rulebook does not cover Spring Along's Mexican Grakle, so the judges embarked on an immediate powwow before agreeing on its legitimacy.

■ TAMARILLO produced new tactics to win the best-shod horse prize. Apparently, he double-barrelled the farrier when his shoes were being examined.

■ SOAKING quelling: "That's a wet frog," noted the commentator, as Nicolas Touzaint emerged sodden from falling in the Petplan Puddle.

And "A great ride by Daisy Duck" — as Daisy Dick finished an easy clear round during a monsoon shower.

■ SPECTATORS were enraged that the powers-that-be did not put down straw on the quagmire through the trade stands as one after another went A over T. It was question of insurance, apparently. The rumour spread that, in their natural state, the hazards of the mud could be deemed an Act of God, while any "helpful" addition would make the authorities liable.

■ LESLIE LAW formally retired Shear H20 by riding him in the competitors' parade. Shear H20 amassed 1,817 BE points and more than £80,000 in prize-money during his career and deserved the rousing send-off.

"It was an emotional retirement," said Leslie. "He's sound and well, but his enthusiasm isn't what it was."

■ THE youngest equine starter was the seven-year-old Elkazar, ridden by Nikolay Tomochko from the Ukraine (below). They suffered two cross-country stops and a fall and rapped three show jumps, but nonetheless completed the competition in 54th place.



EVENTING



Zara Phillips and Toytown perform an excellent dressage test, which scored 38 and left them in equal third with Germany's Frank Ostholt after the first phase

"Toytown didn't want to go out into the wet either, and he banked fence four (two boxy tables on a bending line)," explained Zara. "We just had to get on with it and I had to ride like I always do. It wasn't just the weather, the fences came thick and fast with no let-up, but he was full of running at the end."

Leslie Law nursed Shear L'Eau round after the grey lost a shoe at the cliff-like Touareg drop (11b), but still recorded a somewhat laboured clear round. They incurred time-faults due to diverting to the long route when the horse straddled the parallel (19), clouting Leslie's cheekbone. Shear L'Eau was later withdrawn because he had bruised his martingale area.

Frank Ostholt revived Germany's medal prospects with a good clear, but Air Jordan looked a spent force over the latter part of the course, and was penalised by 6.4 time-faults to drop from third to sixth. Hinrich Romeike also produced a slower clear round (16pen) as the third German score to count, in 21st place. But it was their individual

compatriots who stole the limelight. Ingrid Klimke blitzed into seventh on Sleep Late, 9sec under the time, and Andreas Dibowski (FRH Serve Well) secured a third German berth in the top 10, with Frank's as their only team score in this elite band.

Meanwhile, although the German team had lost its lead, France was keeping up a spirited defence of her title. Team riders Didier Willefert and Arnaud Boiteau completed with 6.8 and 7.6 time-faults apiece to take eighth and 11th spots respectively.

Although reigning champion Nicolas Touzaint toppled off Hildago D'Is at the Petplan Puddle, Gilles Vinel had already secured a safe clear on

Blakring "Milli HN to press Germany for silver. Individual Jean-Lou Bigot illustrated France's strength in depth when this former champion rang through the rain to move into the top five on Derty De Longueval. But the Saumur winner was spun at the final horse inspection the next morning.

Belgium's Karin Donckers produced a cracking round in the gathering dusk, but — with the next-best Belgian in 31st — she was gunning for individual glory. Her Irish-bred Gormley revelled in the conditions to finish third, just 0.1pen behind Pippa Funnell, Finland's sole representative. Pia Pantou, also clocked a neat, fast round on her Swedish Warmblood Yopja Karuso to move up to ninth position overnight. This was due reward for Pia, who was one of the favourites for Athens before Karuso injured himself en route to Greece.

REPORTS

Eventing Blenheim Petplan European Championships

Ingrid Klimke and the British-bred Sleep Late, who failed to make Germany's team but took individual bronze



“Zara first, William second and Jeanette 12th, the real fight was for the silver medal between France and Germany.

The Germans were eager to lay their Athens ghosts to rest and came into this championship in untouchable form. But they relinquished their dressage lead when Bettina Hoy had a cross-country stop, and their team plummeted still further to bronze following the show jumping.

Frank Ostholt performed best of the German team, with a double clear and fifth place, while individual rider Ingrid Klimke surpassed them all to take individual bronze on Sleep Late.

Two for Britain, one for Germany: gold medalist Zara Phillips between William Fox-Pitt (silver) and Ingrid Klimke (bronze)



REPORTS

Eventing Blenheim Petplan European Championships

first three riders — Bettina Hoy, Anna Warnecke and Hinrich Romeike — racked up 24 penalties between them, which eventually demoted them to bronze. Although the highest-placed German team rider, Frank Ostholt, went clear, his three time-faults cost him individual bronze.

France secured silver when three of her four men jumped clear, keeping the Brits up to the task in hand. Arnaud Boiteau was highest individually, finishing eighth on the talented Expo Du Moulin.

While the team competition was a glorious procession, the individual prizes were more tightly fought, with three rails covering the top 12. Pia Pantou and Andreas Dibowski exploited this narrow margin, each going clear to rise three places into sixth and seventh respectively.

The most notable plummet came from Ensign, who had already thrilled Pippa Funnell with his performance. In this final phase, they lowered



Best of the French: Arnaud Boiteau and Expo Du Moulin, eighth, make up for falling in Athens

two rails, dropping from silver to ninth place.

Karin Donckers missed her stride and ploughed through fence two, slipping to fourth from bronze.

These mistakes allowed William Fox-Pitt to enter the equation with his accurate clear round, and slot into silver position — which looked unlikely after phase one. Recent Burghley winner William has been surfing a wave of successes.

"I've gone from one high to another — which is unusual in this game," said William. "This team medal is particularly special because we won on home ground."

Ingrid Klimke's rise up the leaderboard was even more impressive because she sneaked into bronze medal position from original 16th.

"I never do such a bad test and I was really depressed," said Ingrid, who was excluded from the team due to a broken shoulder that sidelined her for eight weeks. "Sleep Late hated the sun and flies on Friday because he's a headshaker. I was the only one who enjoyed the rain!"

Zara Phillips has twice started show jumping in the lead at major events, only to lose out — but she wasn't fluffing her lines this time. She rode into the arena smiling and left crying with joy.

France's consistent jumping — her three scores to count included just four jumping faults throughout the second two phases — elevated her to silver. The defending European and Olympic Champions had their work cut out this time, with only one of the original team partnerships still intact, but this performance proved that the French remain a potent force.

Dressage SPECTATORS struck a rich vein of top-class tests on Thursday, seeing three of the final top five.

Frenchman Didier Willefert produced a polished display on Escape Lane "Milli to score 40.2, but when Germany's Bettina Hoy floated in straight afterwards on Ringwood Cockatoo, it was clear that some special marks were in store.

Her immaculate test was rewarded with a perfect 10 for canterwork, and nines for riding — orbiting her to the top of the leaderboard on 31.3. Bettina produced a similar score in Athens, before losing her gold medal thanks to that well-documented show jumping mishap.

"We're not looking for revenge after Athens. I've moved on," insisted Bettina, who was

nursing an injured collar-bone. "We want to show that we can repeat that performance; that it wasn't a one-off. This was a great score for him — he isn't a warmblood, just very willing to learn. Jumping comes more naturally."

Try as they might, those following could not catch Frau Hoy. Best of the rest was Britain's Pippa Funnell, who conjured an impressive test from the inexperienced Ensign to lie in second on 37.8.

"That was his best test by a long way — a delight. I'm taking each phase as it comes," said Pippa, riding as an individual for the first time since 1999.

“Sleep Late hated the sun and flies on Friday because he’s a headshaker. I was the only one who enjoyed the rain”

Ingrid Klimke

THE BEST TIPSTER

■ H&H's tipsters evidently have their fingers on the pulse — they all named at least one individual medalist, while Mike Tucker, Jane Holderness-Roddam, Ian Stark and Pippa Roome all put the British team on top.

The best prediction came from Ian Stark, who chose the correct team order and the silver and gold individual medalists, albeit in the wrong order. Here is Ian's forecast again:



Touzaint. Being patriotic, my team prediction is Britain, France, Germany."

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EVENTING

HOW DID THE BRITISH INDIVIDUALS FARE?

■ PIPPA FUNNELL and ENSIGN, ninth (see box on previous winners, page 36).

■ DAISY DICK and SPRING ALONG, 11th: foot-perfect double clear.



■ MATTHEW WRIGHT and PARK PILOT (above), 13th: added just 0.4pen to his dressage score to leap up from 39th. Took prizes for best owner/rider and closest male to the optimum time.

■ POLLY STOCKTON and TOM QUIGLEY, 20th: fast clear across country, but knocked down three coloured poles.

■ JAMES ROBINSON and COMANCHE, 21st: bold across country, but 18pen show jumping dumped him down from 12th.



■ OLIVER TOWNEND and TOPPING (above), 43rd: stumbled up step and ran out at Petplan Pitstop (6). Accrued 15pen show jumping but still youngest male rider to complete at 22.

■ POLLY JACKSON and TWO FOR JOY, 45th: two plucky jumping rounds, but one unfortunate refusal when Polly took a gamble on a long stride at the Hayrack (17).

■ KITTY BOGGIS and FIVE BOYS: retired after two refusals at Cameron's Cottage (13).