

# The British give a golden masterclass

Britain clinches an eighth successive team gold as old rivals disintegrate. Crowning it all is a first individual title for Tina Cook, and silver for late call-up Piggy French. Pippa Roome reports

CHALLENGING, dramatic – even sun-drenched; last week's HSBC FEI European Eventing Championships in Fontainebleau, France, proved everything a championship should be. And best of all, for the British, Tina Cook rode with grace and guts to win her first major title, 16 years after first appearing on a British senior squad. She led a British onslaught that yielded an eighth consecutive team gold medal – with a margin of 92.7pen – and individual silver for Piggy French in a dazzling senior squad debut. "To be European champion is massive and unbelievable," said Tina, 39. "I didn't think I'd ever come back to the top level after having two children. The longer you're in the sport, the more you appreciate it when it goes right. I'm very lucky to have a horse of the class of Miners Frolic and he's

dreams can come true, miracles can happen and pigs can fly." While old rivals France and Germany suffered one calamity after another, the story of the weekend was one of – almost – undiluted success for the British squad and their younger than usual horses. William Fox-Pitt was fourth on 13-year-old Idalgo, while Nicola Wilson proved a superb team pathfinder on 12-year-old Opposition Buzz, ninth individually. His speed and consistency cross-country mean he could be Britain's next Over To You and take the long-term pathfinder role which demands

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Tina Cook, European champion



Oliver Townend, Nicola Wilson, Tina Cook and William Fox-Pitt with their medals. This was Britain's eighth successive team victory at senior Europeans and 21st in total since the championship began in 1953. Can we keep it up in Luhmühlen 2011?

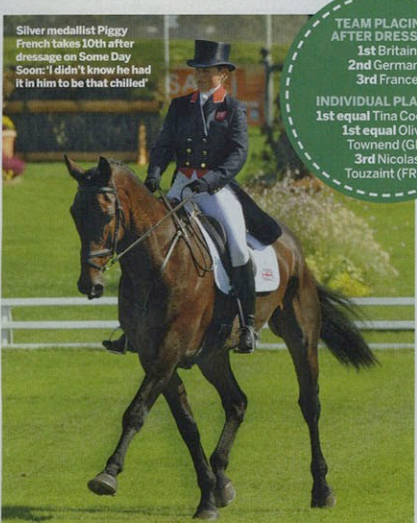
## Cross-country British brilliance, German disaster

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.

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 DRESSAGE**  
1st Britain  
2nd Germany  
3rd France

**INDIVIDUAL PLACINGS**  
1st equal Tina Cook (GB)  
1st equal Oliver Townend (GB)  
3rd Nicolas Touzaint (FRA)

## Dressage Brits' hard work brings rewards

The British team are in the lead at the end of the second day of dressage. No, that's not a typo, they have beaten the French – and even the Germans

"WHEN I saw I'd be following Ingrid Klimke in the dressage I was reasonably suicidal," said Tina Cook of the draw, which put each British team member following a German. But in the end, it worked in Britain's favour. Thursday morning's marking was perplexing to many. Germany's Michael Jung performed a seemingly excellent test on La Biosthetique-Sam FBW, but scored only 45, to his own and other's bafflement. British lead-off rider Nicola Wilson had a similar experience with Opposition Buzz, albeit some 11.7 points further back. Michael led until his team-mate Frank Osthoit rode after lunch. Suddenly, the ground jury – Michael Asseray (E), David Lee (C) and Anne Mette Binder (M) – gave the eight and nine buttons some exercise and rewarded Air

On Friday, Michel Asseray gave a 10 to Ingrid Klimke (FRH Butts Abraxas), who equaled Frank's mark – and then Tina Cook got one too, from Anne Mette Binder for her mid-test halt. Tina and Miners Frolic were a picture of harmony, only marred by a rushed rein-back. They stormed ahead on 37.9. "He felt soft and relaxed, but I'm no dressage queen so I didn't want to start smiling in case everyone else thought I should have done better," she said. After lunch, Nicolas Touzaint strutted his stuff with Tatchou he got two 10s, but a big spook didn't help. His 38.1, coupled with a 43.8 from Jean Teulère (Espoir De La Mare), meant the French were confidently in team bronze. Soon after Nicolas, Piggy French slipped into 10th with a "chilled" test from the sometimes spooky Some Day Sooon. Belgium's Karin Donckers performed with her customary elegance on Badminton dressage leader Gazelle De La Brasserie for fifth, just behind Dutchman Tim Lips, 24, on the ex-international show jumper Van Schijndel's Concrex Owaola. And five from the end came a test to equal Tina's – from her team-mate, Oliver Townend, who rode for every mark. But the Badminton and Burghley winner was uncharacteristically downbeat, stressing that Flint Curtis was not on his best form. It was a foretaste of things to come. "He's a bit tight in his body, but there's nothing wrong with him," said Oliver. "I feel very lucky to be in this position – but I'd rather be in it at the end than the beginning." Nevertheless, mirroring events at the August dressage Europeans in Windsor, the British team had once again overhauled Germany, and the competition was truly underway.

## CHAMPIONSHIP CHAT

LUCY WIEGIERSMA enjoyed a successful British senior squad debut, finishing 13th on the 10-year-old Woodfalls Inigo Jones. "I'm a relatively seasoned campaigner and it's been a long time coming, but it's a great honour to earn my senior badge," she said. Lucy was 15th after dressage on 45pen and added 15.2 time-



Lucy Wiegiersma earns her badge

penalties on the cross-country. She then had two show jumps down and two time penalties. "It was a little bit frustrating to have the [cross-country] time-faults, but realistically I knew he wouldn't make the time," said Lucy. "He was a little green, but straight and honest. He's learnt a lot, I've learnt a lot and I've learnt a lot about him."

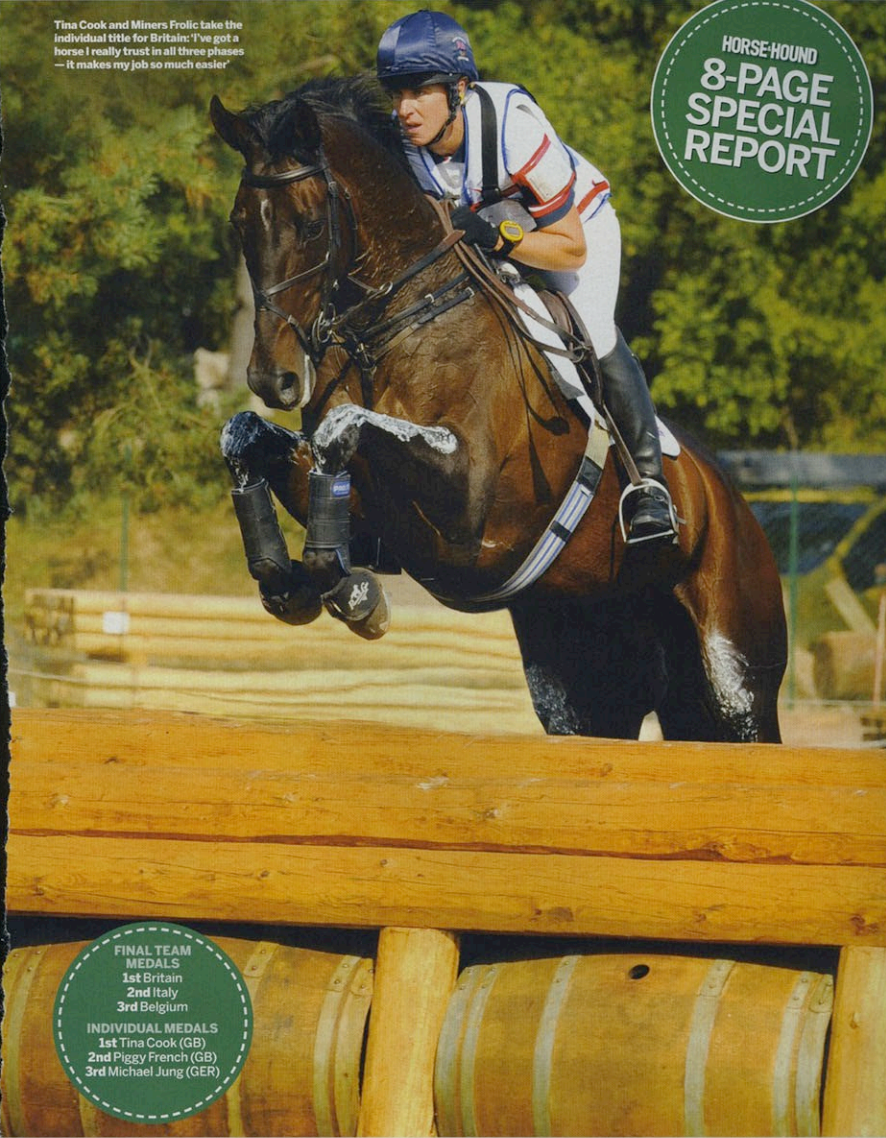
THE youngest rider was Sanna Siltakorpi, 22, the sole Fin. She was 20th on Lucky Accord. Finland-based Sanna makes regular forays abroad to train and compete. Pia Pantu, the 2003 Badminton runner-up, was her mentor here. "I said I wouldn't come without Pia," said Sanna.

Year	Venue	Dressage leader	Horse	Mark	Final Placing
2001	Pau	Ingrid Klimke	Robinson's Concorde	33	WD before XC
2003	Punchestown	Nicolas Touzaint	Galan De Sauvagine	29.8	1st
2005	Blenheim	Bettina Hoy	Ringwood Cockatoo	31.3	24th
2007	Pratoni del Vivaro	Bettina Hoy	Ringwood Cockatoo	271	3rd
2009	Fontainebleau	Tina Cook	Miners Frolic	37.9	1st
		Oliver Townend	Flint Curtis	37.9	Elim final trot-up

THIS year's event produced an unusual situation with joint leaders after dressage. Tina Cook and Oliver Townend's marks are worse than that of any leader since 2001 (marks are not comparable before that), but this reflected the marking rather than the quality of their tests. Tina is the first dressage leader to win the event since Nicolas Touzaint and the wonderful grey Galan De Sauvagine triumphed for France in 2003.



When I was put on the reserve list I thought the selectors wanted to show they were interested in me for the future – I didn't think this was my year at all Piggy French, from reserve to individual silver medalist



Tina Cook and Miners Frolic take the individual title for Britain: 'I've got a horse I really trust in all three phases – it makes my job so much easier'

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2nd Italy  
3rd Belgium

**INDIVIDUAL MEDALS**  
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More pictures online at  
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Clear in the time were my inst and thank goodness I did it  
Nicola Wilson, a superb pathfinder for Bri



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

Brits watched in nervous anticipation. But she rode with tunnelled concentration, placing the 11-year-old exactly at his fences, guiding this big horse at speed round the corners and using the most of his thoroughbred stride to make up vital seconds in the final run home. They finished just 2sec over the time to take the lead. "I'm elated to be in the lead, but it wasn't a course I enjoyed or which suited him," said Tina. "I had to be a bit chancy on the corners and he helped me out a couple of times at fences. The strength in our partnership is that he trusts me." 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 corners where I'd have liked to slow down." It was up to France now to provide the Brits with a serious rival and Nicolas Touzaint set off in style. But Tatchou jumped through the white flag marking the permitted part of the angled right-hand boat corner out of the first water (fence 8), with the bendable pole passing under his right armpit. The ground jury pulled Nicolas up at fence 13 and soon confirmed that he was eliminated. With their hero out of the running, droves of French spectators left the course, although the home side remained front-runners for the silver position overnight. Piggy French added just 5.6 time penalties to pull up to fourth on Some Day Sooon, saying, "I'm relieved – all the Brits have gone so well. I didn't want to let the side down."



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

he's gone very well," said Arnaud. Germany's misery continued when individual Dirk Schrade, never Gadget De La Cere's head when he stopped at the skinny out the second water. Worse was to come when their lead team rider, Ingrid Klimke, led FRH Butts Abraxas. He leaped over the first of the two angled hedges at fence 11 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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flowered in the main arena. In the second round 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 to 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 Vigier (Coronado Prior). Their spirits were boosted when individual Didier Dhenin (Ismere 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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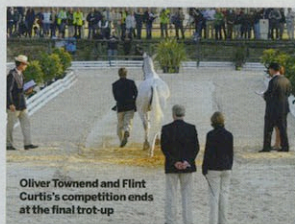


The Germans' day of torment concluded when Euroridings Butts Leon left his legs on the skinny into the second water, flinging himself and Andreas Dibowski into the drink. "It went as badly as we could possibly imagine," said Michael Jung, who retained second individually overnight as the sole German finisher. Oliver Townend was last out for Britain but the first to have trouble when Flint Curtis ran out at the boat corner and again at fence 22. "He never really switched on – he didn't lock on at the boat corner. Then he struggled with the three strides after the table [to the corner at 22] and when I grabbed him for four, he said, 'Get stuffed,'" explained Oliver, who was the ultimate professional in both finishing the course and fulfilling his press duties afterwards. "Every step I wanted to pull him up and bring him home safely, but

it's a team job, and if there's something wrong with one of the others tomorrow, Flint's there." Jean Teulère provided a fantastic end to the day with a flying round for the French team on his 17-year-old 2002 world champion Espoir De La Mare. The main arena buzzed as the crowd cheered him home and his 6.4 time-penalties confirmed France's team silver position and put him sixth individually. Britain was out in front by 57.4pen and team gold looked in the bag, barring disasters, with Tina and William in individual gold and bronze places. Meanwhile, the Italians had made steady progress to line up the third team medal, with clears from Roberto Rotatori (Della Malaspina Irahm De Viages) and Juan Carlos Garcia (Iran Du Golfe). Stefano Brecciaroli (Orton) provided the other counting score with one stop.

## French hopes die at final trot-up

THE non-appearance of the best-placed French team horse, Jean Teulère's Espoir De La Mare, at the final horse inspection on Sunday morning spelt disaster for the home side. As Nicolas Touzaint had been eliminated across country, the French team was down to only two horses, meaning it had to carry a score of 1,000 for a non-completion and was effectively eliminated. This enabled the Italians to move up into the silver-medal position heading into the show jumping, and Belgium rose to bronze. Britain lost Oliver Townend at this stage – Flint Curtis looked a little unwell and the ground jury eliminated him after sending him to the holding box. As he was providing the discard mark, the team position and team score was unaffected, and the Brits



Oliver Townend and Flint Curtis's competition ends at the final trot-up

held a gargantuan 70.7 mark lead over Italy before tackling the coloured poles. French individual Arnaud Boiteau did not present fifth-placed Expo Du Moulin, who had lost a shoe on course the day before.

## CHAMPIONSHIP CHAT

THE oldest horses were 19-year-olds Coronado Prior, 17th with France's Eric Vigeanel, and Stand By Me, 11th for Swedish individual Linda Algotsson. This pair took individual silver at the Luhmühlen Europeans (1999) and in Punchestown (2003). "Most of my team-mates are riding horses who weren't even born in 1999," she said. "I thought Hong Kong last year would be his last competition, but he came home fresh. We tried some competitions in the spring and he was better than ever. I'll go on competing him as long as he's happy."



Linda Algotsson and 19-year-old Stand By Me: 'Better than ever'

CROSS-country day started badly for the Irish when Sacha Pemble (I've Been Dun) was eliminated for three stops, but then picked up when Sam Watson (Horseware Bushman, eventual 23rd) recorded a fast round with one run-out at the final water. As a team medal looked possible, Patricia Ryan took a long route at fence 22 to ensure a clear with Fernhill Clover Mist, eventual 19th. But all was lost when Elizabeth Power, 12th after dressage with Kilpatrick River, had three stops. "The bronze medal was nearly round their necks – and then it wasn't. But it will give them a lot of hope for the future," said chef d'equipe Ginny Elliot.

THE Italian team manager Katherine Lucheschi has only been in the job since June. Originally from Britain, she has lived in Italy most of her life, having married an Italian 28 years ago. She was on the ground jury at the European Championships