



## Smooth run for Santano

Saumur, France  
19-22 May  
By Martha Terry

**S**AUMUR provided a fascinating Olympic trial, with the top two putting themselves at the forefront of selection for Rio. Surrey-based Australian Chris Burton and Santano II led throughout the NAF Superflex CCI3\* to beat the home hope Thomas Carille on Upsilon by 2.2 penalties.

The best of the dressage

tests came on day one, with the top three remaining unaltered through Friday. Chris' smooth test on Santano, a black nine-year-old by dressage stallion Sandro Hill, took the lead on Thursday with 40.2 – and stayed there. The British and Swedish judges (Sandy Phillips, at C, and Christina Klingspor, at B) ranked him first, while the French judge, Catherine Agaesse, was less impressed, putting him 10th.

Santano holds the world record for the best finishing

score at a CCI since 2010, and Chris was disappointed with his mark.

"He wouldn't normally score in the 40s," he said. Catherine Agaesse's first choice, Switzerland's Felix Vogt, took second on 43 with the dapple grey Cleveland III, 0.2 of a penalty ahead of Thomas' flashy stallion Upsilon (by Canturo).

Another Britain-based Antipodean, Tim Price, slotted into fourth on Cloud Dancer, like Santano a black warmblood

with sterling dressage lines (San Remo x Sandro Hill).

Some of the seven-strong British contingent were in contention should the cross-country prove influential. Oliver Townend had two in the top 10: Cillnabradren Evo (seventh) and Cooley SRS (eighth).

**No one inside the time** PIERRE MICHELET's course looked intense, being on the short side for a CCI3\* at 5,700m with its 41 jumping efforts the max permitted.

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But when pathfinder Oliver Townend steered the first of his three rides, OOT Ghareeb, clear for two time-faults despite taking a long route, he made the track look eminently rideable.

But the next two riders faltered at an innocuous angled brush, another retired after running out at the gigantic corner at fence three, and Upsilon was majestic to move ahead of Oliver early on with

look like quite a feat. It earned Ghareeb a hike from 23rd to sixth overnight.

"Ghareeb can be spooky; he's not always so confident," said Oliver. "It's the toughest course I've seen at Saumur, so I rode positively and he felt happy." Upsilon was majestic to move ahead of Oliver early on with



British pair Alice Dunston and Samba are eighth in the two-star

## ONE TO WATCH

Franky Reid-Warrilow

**WILL** Franky step up Dolley Whisper to four-star after making light of this troublesome track? They added 10.4 time-faults cross-country to move up from 18th to sixth. The little mare has been defying expectations all her life. "My mum bought her as a three-year-old from a YouTube clip," said Franky. "She arrived from Holland as a tiny whippet – 14.2hh. I told mum to send it back!"

"She's now 15.3hh, and warmblood, not made for eventing, but she gets in gear and stays there," added Franky. "There were some serious questions on this track, but she is so good on a line. We have a conversation all the way; I only need to sit up a fraction and she'll hunch her ears and understand. "We're qualified for Badminton, but I don't want to go until I can finish in the top 10. She keeps proving me wrong."



4.4 time-faults and into second, jumping with assurance beyond his eight years. He even went direct through the "sandpit" at 24ab and 25ab, which involved two drops to corners up and down sharp slopes. He'll be giving the French selectors a headache now he's burst onto the three-star scene.

"He acts like he has the experience of a 14-year-old; he's careful and confident," said Thomas. "The only concern is that he's so young, but he won his first advanced, came fourth at Belton CIC3\* and made this tough track feel easy. He's done enough to go to Rio."

Cloud Dancer was nailing the course and a podium finish

when he racked up two tired refusals at the third-last. This water featured an offset bounce of cottages to a third skinned cottage in the water. It proved influential, with five faulting here.

Chris Burton showed Santano knows more than how to point his toes, cruising home in the fastest time for 1.2 time-faults and not a moment's worry, though he also played it safe through the sandpit.

"He surprised me how good he was – my coach told me to go slowly," said Chris of the horse's first attempt at CCI3\*. "We weren't planning to do three-star until the autumn, but my coach suggested trying to



A showjumping clear propels Arnaud Boiteau and Sultan De La Motte into third



Oliver Townend and Cillnabradren Evo finish best of the Brits in fifth, preserving their double clear record together

qualify for the Olympics so I had another option.

"My partner found him for me on HorseQuest in a dressage yard when I was having a bad run. We think a lot of him."

Meanwhile, Chris' closest challenger Felix Vogt's bid soon evaporated when the tail-swishing Cleveland III ground to a halt at fence three, and he retired after a refusal at the small keyhole fence at 8a.

"He's green and careful; this was probably a bit early for him," rued Felix.

Wiltshire-based Astier Nicolas "kept kicking" to storm up from ninth to third on the "spooky" Molakai.

"He sees dragons in the fences, but he likes French tracks – he prefers skinlines to scary ditches," said Astier. His 3.2 time-faults put the pressure on the final two – Thomas again on his 2015 European partner Sirocco Du Gers, fifth after dressage, and Oliver on his best-placed ride, Cillnabradren Evo – to make the unobtainable time. The white-faced Sirocco flattened his ears and did his utmost to make the top three, failing by 1.7 time-faults to overhaul Astier but taking fourth.

Last to go, Oliver was coasting on Sally-Anne Egginton's black gelding, but he ran out of gas towards the end, and Oliver took unplanned long routes at the sandpit and final water to add 11.2 time-faults and slide one place to eighth.

"He got tired; he's never gone that far when clear in a CCI3\*," said Oliver. "He ran fantastically well up to eight minutes [optimum time was 10 minutes], and then I just had to get him home. He has all the attributes to be top-class."

Oliver could have had three in the top 10. Cooley SRS was flying round until being flagged down at fence 22, having been adjudged not to jump through the flags at fence three.

"He felt like he went to jump the corner and never attempted to run out, but somehow he didn't go inside the flag," said Oliver. "It was a great experience for him; he jumped really well and doesn't know he's done anything wrong. It was rather an expensive three-

star schooling session." This cream-painted corner caused three refusals, a retirement and Oliver's elimination. It sat at the bottom of a steep hill on a left-hand turn, and its presence so early on indicated the calibre of this track, though it jumped well.

Riders deemed the course to be tough at the start and finish, but it produced ideal results, with just one rider fall and a significant shake-up of the dressage placings.

**Showjumping downpours** AFTER 25°C sunshine on cross-country day, rain lashed down throughout Saturday night and most of Sunday – though the sandy soil held up well. Sirocco

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Du Gers was the only protagonist absent from the final horse inspection, suffering from a haematoma on his cannon bone.

Oliver, jumping out of order on Cillnabradren Evo, set the target with an early clear for eventual fifth, preserving their impeccable double clear record together. British hopes were further boosted when Franky Reid-Warrilow's Dolley Whisper (see box, p53) skipped round for sixth, leapfrogging from 18th after dressage. Franky more than made amends after feeling "demoralised" by her 51.6 dressage mark for what she considered a personal best.

And while Ghareeb and Molakai booted out two and three apiece to drop to eighth and ninth, Arnaud Boiteau's Sultan De La Motte held the pressure on the leaders from fourth with a clear to ensure third – from 15th after dressage. But Upsilon drew gasps from the spectators, leaving feet to spare as he pinged round. Last year's Le Lion seven-year-old silver medalist is already a star for French fans – a flamboyant grey stallion with talent to burn. And Thomas, with three horses qualified for Rio, knows which one he wants to ride.

Chris wasn't sure what to expect from the "green" Santano, but though they expended their one-fence advantage at the fourth, Chris held his nerve to secure his second Saumur win after Haruzac in 2012.

"Santano's just the right type for Rio; he is so special in the dressage, he's careful and he made me very happy by how much blood he showed across country," he said. **TIME**

## RESULTS

CCI3\* - 1. Santano II (C Burton) AUS 40.2, 2.4, 4.45; 2. Upsilon (C Carlini) FRA 43.2, 2.4, 0.47; 3. Sultan De La Motte (A Boiteau) FRA 50.2, 2.0, 0.13; 4. Cillnabradren Evo (O Townend) GB 47.8, 2.0, 5.8; 5. Dolley Whisper (F Reid-Warrilow) GB 51.6, 2.0, 0.45; 6. OOT Ghareeb (O Townend) GB 53.2, 2.0, 0.43; 7. Cooley SRS (C Burton) AUS 53.2, 2.0, 0.43; 8. Cooley SRS (C Burton) AUS 53.2, 2.0, 0.43; 9. Arnaud Boiteau (A Boiteau) FRA 47.3, 0.0, 4.7; 10. Samba (A Dunston) 44.2, 0.0, 0.2; CCI3\* - 1. Victor De La Trinité (M Lemoine) FRA 43.0, 0.0, 0.43; 2. Carivitus (N Toussaint) FRA 43.0, 0.0, 0.43; 3. Sirec Du Gers (A Sirocco) FRA 43.0, 0.0, 0.43; 4. My Square De Reva (F Reid-Warrilow) 49.7, 0.0, 0.43; 5. Dream On (V C Minshaw) GB 55.8, 0.2, 0.87; 2.