



Michael Jung rises from fifth to win his first ERM, riding Star Connection

Jung conquers

Michael Jung adds to his glittering CV with a win on his Event Rider Masters debut, but Britain puts up a strong showing with two riders finishing in the top four



France's Karim Florent Laghouag fills the runner-up spot with stallion Entebbe De Hus

Haras du JardY, France

By PIPPA ROOME

HE came, he saw, he conquered. Michael Jung may have been making his Event Rider Masters (ERM) debut, but no one was surprised when the double Olympic champion snaffled up the €19,000 (£16,600) winner's prize in the first French leg of this innovative series.

It is strange, perhaps, that it has taken the German master so long to jump on the ERM steam train, considering his horsepower. He took his ride here, Star Connection, to Wiesbaden in June, but had to run him as a regular CIC3* competitor — the only one — because he was not qualified for ERM, which cannot be a horse's first CIC3*. The pair would have finished third there had they been in the ERM. They were then second in the hot Luhmühlen CIC3* two weeks later.

Jardy was a typical Michael victory — he lurked quietly in fifth

'She has the vet and farrier at her beck and call'

GEMMA TATTERSALL ON THE FRAGILE CHICO BELLA P

after dressage, showjumping clear and then put in an exquisitely judged cross-country round, taking nothing extra out of his partner to finish seven seconds over the time. Had he been one second slower, he'd have slipped to second.

Michael has had the nine-year-old Chacco-Blue son Star Connection since he was four and he was the six-year-old world champion at Le Lion d'Angers. But he lost more than a year's competition mileage as he suffered a serious injury as a seven-year-old.

"He is a bit spooky, but otherwise quite easy — he's a super jumper and very brave," said Michael.

Karim Florent Laghouag took second on Entebbe De Hus. This pair were on the French gold medal-winning team at Rio, but had a cross-country stop, so are not qualified for this year's European Championships, having also retired at Saumur in May. As such, Karim had no qualms about running fast and he was one of 13 in the time across country.

"His greatest quality is his elasticity and suppleness," said Karim. "He always wants to work. Everyone wants to ride him at home even though he's a stallion. When he's breeding, he gets agitated in the stable, but when he's ridden he's not distracted."

"In the past we've lacked confidence and he didn't trust me, but now he's gained in maturity and we have a good partnership."

TALENTED BUT FRAGILE

BRITAIN fielded Oliver Townend and Gemma Tattersall in third and fourth, both riding horses who are extremely talented but fragile and whose careers have been interrupted by injury.

Oliver's ride, Angela Hislop's Ramiro B 12-year-old Cooley Master Class, is a double Burnham Market CIC3* winner, but has not run across country since that fixture in mid-April. But he moved up from 10th after dressage by staying on his dressage score, including nailing one of only three showjumping clears in the time. Michael also recorded one and France's Donatien Schauly (Pivoine Des Touches, seventh) the third.

"This is the top of our sport for one-day events and it needs to be tough," said Oliver, approving of the tight showjumping time. "The time was disappointingly slack across country, but that suited my horse as it was his first run back."

Oliver also piloted Angela Hislop's Cooley SRS, who is long-listed for the Europeans, to second in the regular CIC3*.

Gemma rode Chris Stone's Chico Bella P and had two time-faults in both the showjumping and cross-country — without one or the other, she would have won. Last year's Bramham CIC3* winner is carefully managed.

"She has the vet and farrier at her beck and call," said Gemma, who returns to the top of the series leaderboard with this result. "She's not allowed to be turned out and my girls spend hours walking and hand grazing her so she can have a life. She doesn't trot on the roads ever; she goes on the water treadmill and swims."

Britain had two more runners. Sarah Cohen and Treason followed up their Wiesbaden

ERM win with ninth, which keeps Sarah second in the series leaderboard. She added just two showjumping time-faults after being slightly off the pace in the dressage.

ERM debutant Will Furlong, 22, made a strong start with seventh after dressage, but 10 showjumping faults relegated him and Livingstone out of contention.

END OF A STREAK

BETTINA HOY led the dressage for Germany on 31.4, explaining she was not surprised Seigneur Medicott was 5.1 marks worse than his Luhmühlen score as he was a little tired performing in the heat after a 10-hour journey overnight on Thursday. A showjumping and five time-faults, followed by 0.8 of a cross-country time-penalty, left her fifth.

This ended Seigneur Medicott's streak after four consecutive three-star wins, but was a good preparation for the European Championships.

Bettina's ex-husband, Australia's Andrew Hoy, held

second after the first phase, but plummeted from contention when Cheeky Calimbo was well off the second angled brush on a long two-stride distance at the last combination (fences 24ab and 25) and ran-out.

France's Thibaut Vallette was second after showjumping on his Rio partner Qing Du Briot ENE HN, but he was unsure whether to run fast ahead of the Europeans. That became irrelevant when the pair had a run-out at the second angled brush in the last water (fence 20b), which could be tackled on a long one or short two strides. **H&H**

Oliver Townend (Cooley Master Class) produces a rare fault-free showjumping round for third

RESULTS

ERM CIC3* — 1. Star Connection (M Jung) GER 35.7, 0.2, 8:38.5; 2. Entebbe De Hus (KF Laghouag) FRA 34.9, 4.0, 38.5; 3. Cooley Master Class (O Townend) GBR 39.1, 0.0, 39.1; 4. Chico Bella P (G Tattersall) GBR 36.3, 2.2, 40.3; 5. Treason (S Cohen) GER 42.5, 0.0, 44.5. CIC3* — 1. Romantic Love (G Fer) FRA 43.7, 0.4, 46.1; 2. Cooley SRS (O Townend) 43.9, 0.4, 47.9; 3. Debby (N Touzaint) FRA 44.7, 4.0, 49.1; 4. Nysa De Petra (V Madsen) GBR 50.0, 5.6, 56.4.

ONLY IN HORSE & HOUND

Glitz, glamour and the going

The ERM flourishes in Jardy, where groundwork is key, says Pippa Roome

OPINION

think is too few. It's not meant to be a jump-off and a time just two seconds longer would have kept riders thinking, but meant exceptionally careful jumpers such as Qing Du Briot ENE HN and Chico Bella P were not punished with faults.

A GLAMOROUS VENUE

IT'S remarkable how European events manage to be both relaxed and glamorous.

Jardy has as its hub a glass orangery, with space for a restaurant, bar and VIP areas. The building is fronted by a wide verandah overlooking the huge permanent main arena, a glorious place to sit in the sun and watch. There were also beautiful permanent stables.

At first glance, the cross-country let the venue down. Although the ERM fences were well presented, some of the lower level jumps looked tired, which is perhaps not surprising as this busy equestrian centre runs numerous competitions.

Pippa Roome has been *H&H* eventing editor since 2011, reporting at two European Championships, two World Equestrian Games and the Rio Olympics. She has competed up to intermediate level.



TREATING THE RIGHT LINES IS VITAL

THE going is notoriously poor here and I found it both hard and uneven when I walked the course on Friday. A friend who is based in France said they frequently run on worse, but we've become spoilt by the standard of ground preparation at even smaller British events.

The ERM track had been roped off since November in an attempt to provide improved ground and this preparation laid the foundations for the spiking and watering work the

organisers put in over the 48 hours leading up to cross-country. It was still firm, but the difference was noticeable, there were few withdrawals and riders were happy to run high-class horses competitively.

The competitor feedback was that the groundwork was appreciated, but in places the operators had not actually treated the right lines, so riders found themselves galloping outside the prepared track. For next year, the course should either be more tightly roped, a larger area should be treated or riders should be consulted to ensure operators target the correct places.

Pierre Michelet set a suitable cross-country test — some of the lines walked strong, with his trademark open distances to angles and acute skinnies. The fact he encourages riders to go forward contributed to the achievable time, but with the pressure on, a couple of top combinations had run-outs, which kept it exciting. **H&H**

NEXT WEEK Mark Todd writes from Aachen