



# ROYAL INTERNATIONAL HORSE SHOW

The home team reigned supreme as our riders put the Great into Britain to head the three major competitions at the Royal International Horse Show. Hickstead kept its end of the bargain to provide perfect going – and sunshine, too!

## THE BRITS ARE BACK

Tears mingled amongst cheers as, for the first time since Rome 2008 and four years after their last Hickstead victory, Team GBR stood at the top of the podium in the Meydans FEI Nations Cup.

"I'm highly delighted" said World Class Performance manager Rob Hoekstra, who had selected a mixture of young and experienced horses, but all that jump well at Hickstead – "It's a special, unique place. Abroad, the tendency is to have everything the same."

Not everything went to plan, as Tina Fletcher suffered a crashing fall earlier in the day.

"I think I hit every brick in that wall" she said, "I'm a bit sore and bruised, but I'm OK."

Peter Charles – a linchpin of the British team after declaring Olga White's Murka's Pom D'Ami was available solely for the Nations Cup series – set up the team with a fabulous jumping clear, marred only by one time fault. William Funnell on Billy Congo equalled, while Tina Fletcher and Lady Pauline Harris' Hello Sailor incurred two time faults.

"I missed a turn, Sailor was strong and my left arm was weak [after that fall]" she said.

Foreign teams struggled with the gradients and Kelvin Bywater's tough, demanding track, and no-one could provide that elusive clear. Michael Whitaker hit two late fences on GIG Amai for the drop score, but Britain led at the halfway stage on four faults, ten ahead of nearest rival Germany.

Despite several riders finding form in round two with clears, the Brits widened the gap. Michael wasn't required to start as Peter, Will and Tina each incurred just one time fault apiece. They finished on a total of seven to mark a landslide victory. Germany was second on 22

faults with the USA third on 29.

And what a difference a year makes. The 10 winning points put Britain second on the leader-board and secured our place in the 2011 top league.

"Finishing in the top six has always been the aim" said Hoekstra, "and to win here with Hello Sailor and Billy Congo – horses that have just come up from the promotional league – is a real achievement."

Will Funnell was thrilled – "It was lovely to be picked on a homebred horse. Both Billy Congo's parents [Vechta and Billy Autumn] were Nations Cup horses – it's in his blood."

A tearful Tim Stockdale triumphantly held the King George V gold trophy aloft after victory with Colin and Ann Garratt's Fresh Direct Kalico Bay.

"I watched Mike Saywell win this class when I was 12, and said I'm going to win that one day" he said, "Now I've done it."

A year earlier, his hopes of winning had been dashed when Fresh Direct Corlato had crashed through the final fence. This year was also dramatic as a hair-raising first round saw Tim almost unseated twice as the nine-year-old tried to bank a brush over and over-jumped the double of ditches. But they were in the jump-off with six others.

Robert Smith held an early lead on his own and Di and Pennie Cornish's talented Talan, but he'd left room. Tim moved ahead early on using Fresh Direct Kalico Bay's ground-eating stride, keeping him balanced to the last to wrench victory by two seconds.

"This was the biggest he's jumped. He had a few shocks in the first round, the last line



Team Tactics



Tim Stockdale & Fresh Direct Kalico Bay



Anna Edwards & Unique IX



Colin Garratt & Granddaughter

was heart-in-the-mouth stuff" said Tim, "but he was top man, I'm on cloud 92."

The Old Lodge Queen Elizabeth II Cup was opened up in 2008 to gentlemen riders, but it went to the ladies when an ecstatic Anna Edwards marked her biggest victory with the powerful Unique IX.

Surprisingly, just four accessed the jump-off when major players faulted – the final Hickstead planks claiming 2009 winner Laura Renwick and Ellen Whitaker – and the gents were outnumbered three to one.

Anna, who gained her Nations Cup four-star badge on the winning team at Linz, had a lucky rub at the double, but opened with a super clear. No-one could match it. Tina Fletcher and Promised Land hit the vertical in the double for second and a later vertical caught Tracey Priest and Calle. Inexperienced Irishman David Simpson clocked eight faults on Cruise With Me for fourth.

"I've had a fantastic year on him, my best ever" said Clevedon, Bristol based Anna, who has produced this Heartbreaker son for the past four years, "but I thought I'd left enough room, I was just aiming for the clear."