

Brits abroad

How British and Irish riders fared abroad this week

Sultan stars in Spain

 **SHOWJUMPING SPAIN**
GIJON CSIO5*
31 August-4 September

BRUCE MENZIES and Old Lodge's home-bred superstar Sultan V finished the summer season on a high with a Nations Cup double clear and second in the grand prix.

"He's getting better and better and didn't touch a fence all show," said Bruce on the nine-year-old Irco Mena son. "He's grown up this year and is now relaxed and confident in big rings."

The pair had posted a good double clear in the first day's big class before making a Nations Cup team appearance.

Pathfinder Scott Brash returned a disappointing 12 faults on Bon Ami II. But just one time-fault from David McPherson and the scopey Billy Bishop, plus a clear from Bruce and Sultan, pulled Britain back into the reckoning. Anchor Robert Whitaker and Omelli posted 10 faults, putting Team GB in third on 11, behind Sweden on zero and Spain with four faults at halfway. But it was close, as three teams were just one fault behind Britain.

"The course was tough, big and trappy with several tricky distances," said Bruce.

Commenting on the final line of a combination of triple bar, two strides, vertical, one stride, oxer, followed by four strides to a tall gate, he added: "The combination's middle element fell constantly and the four long, flat strides to the gate caught others."

Another line of a big oxer with four short strides to a vertical was also a challenge.

"You really had to sit up and put the anchors on," said Bruce.

Scott improved to come home on four in round two and David amended his one fault with a clear.

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Bruce Menzies on Sultan V, who finished second in the grand prix

Bruce Menzies and Sultan V, whose double clear helped Britain to second in the Nations Cup



On form, with his ears pricked and looking for the next fence, Sultan made little of the track second time around and Bruce posted a double clear — one of only three.

Robert and Omelli returned eight for a total score of 15. Sweden had fallen by the wayside with 16 faults in round two, so it was down to Spain's last rider to

produce a clear to win — if he had one fence down, Britain would finish on top.

But Julio Aras Cueva coped with the pressure to repeat his first-round clear on Murat De Reve. Spain took first on 12 faults.

"Sultan's jumped on four Nations Cup teams and at first the big atmosphere and crowd affected him and he tensed, but now he doesn't spook and feels established," said Bruce. "To finish on a double clear is great and will set us up for next year."

Grand prix tactics yield second

THE grand prix course was also big with tricky distances and dubbed as a careful horse's track. Again the combination proved influential. Situated away from the entrance gate, it was followed by a substantial oxer on four long strides and the back bar hit the floor time and again.

Only four first-round clears were recorded, although the top 10 came forward for the jump-off. Bruce aimed for another clear, but crossed the line with one time-fault, just 0.02sec over. It was their only fault of the show, but earned £25,221 for second place.

Bruce said: "There were a few first-round four-faulters who jumped fast jump-off clears, so I played averages and went steady — if I'd have gone quick and hit a fence I could have ended up sixth!"

From the four initial clears, only France's Patrice Delaveau jumped a second to win on Orient Express. One of round one's four-faulters, Sweden's Malin Baryard-Johnsson and H&M Reveur De Hurtebise, took third.

Bruce praised this show and his owners.

"Old Lodge have been fantastic supporters and these five-star shows are tough, but there's a great atmosphere here and I'd love to come back," he said.

Scott Brash claimed victory in a jump-off class on Liz McTaggart's Pavarotti Van De Helle 10-year-old Bon Ami to earn £11,946. The pair eased in front of Ireland's Cian O'Connor on

MORE ABOUT THE SHOW

GIJON is a coastal city and municipality in northern Spain with a population of 380,000 and features one of Spain's largest shipping ports. It has been associated with a great equestrian tradition for more than half a century and several national and international shows, including the top-rated CSIO5*, take place each

year in the Hipodromo Municipal de Las Mestas.

The show is a real attraction in the town. It regularly draws crowds of 12,000-plus in the evenings, when frantic betting takes place. Classes are split into sections of 10 or 12 horses with 20min intervals between sections to place bets.

"The crowds go wild, it creates a

great atmosphere and the gambling booths underneath the grandstands can be 30 deep," said Bruce Menzies, who explained those using speed classes as schooling rounds must declare their intentions before the class and go early before the betting starts. "If anyone goes slow, the spectators soon start booing!"