

THE SPANISH SUNSHINE TOUR

British riders totalling 55 headed for sunnier climes in Spain and marked their presence with impressive results. Old Lodge's exciting prospect Sultan V underscored his promise with second in the top-billed Invitational grand prix for Bruce Menzies.



Bruce Menzies and Sultan

Of the 45 tackling the testing, 1.60m grand prix track, five Brits contended the 13-strong jump-off. Drawn second, Bruce and the Irco Mena son Sultan swiftly took out a stride to the triple bar and fairly flew to the last.

"The track suited him" said Bruce, who has carefully built the nine-year-old up to this following a break after his Scope grand prix victory and the HOYS seven and eight-year-old final.

"He stepped up well, I'm hoping for teams and perhaps even the Europeans – 'Rob, I'm waiting for the call!'"

A fairytale win wasn't to be, and it was British-based Bermudan Patrick Nisbett who recorded a career best with Cantaro 32.

Last year's Nations Cup linchpin Peter Charles and Murkas Pom D'Ami again showed their consistent form to provide another jump-off clear for third. Both Geoff Billington (Rosinus) and William Funnell (Billy Congo) returned eight faults, while Gemma Plumley and Lutine Du Chamois made just one mistake.

Bruce was a winner in the seven-year-old final, however, as Eclips Van Erpekom eased ahead of Gemma Plumley's Ebro.

Performance manager Rob Hoekstra took keen interest in the results of grand prix classes, looking for consistent clear-round jumpers with early team places in mind. And he was impressed the first week as Brits filled four of the top five grand prix places.

Chloe Aston and Kolibri Classic



Frank Rothenberger's cleverly-designed track subtly used the deceptive gradient on the brilliantly-green turf, and only five of the 51 starters produced clears.

David McPherson's World Equestrian Games partner Chamberlain Z surged ahead to slice two sec from Robert Whitaker's time on Graham Gillespie's USA Today. William Funnell slotted Billy Angelo into third with Tim Page's Quentin Tarantino in fifth.

"Taking out a stride to fence three got it"
Guy Williams

John Whitaker claimed week one's small grand prix on Titi D'Oase, while Guy Williams was in fighting form in the big tour classes with Belinka Van Het Overlede Gode, Titus and Djakarta.

Guy continued to collect big tour classes by the handful before jetting off to Doha for the first leg of the Global Champions Tour, where he also claimed victory with Torinto Van De Middelstede.

Here in Spain, Belinka scored another big win for Guy, Djakarta topped a small grand prix and new ride Orage had a four victory run. But the 11-year-old Titus provided him with his best win – week three's top-billed, 1.50m grand prix worth some £5,900 to the winner "Taking out a stride to fence three got it" said Guy.

A large field of 59 yielded 18 for a hot jump-off, with Guy heading off Ireland's Cian O'Connor and Larkhill Cruiser by a narrow 0.17sec.

William Funnell's stable also notched up multiple wins, riding Julie Slade's consistent Beowulf to victory on six occasions.

In winning mode from the off, William capitalised on the 10-year-old's week one win to clock up three big victories the following week.

"He's learning to speed up" said William, also praised the tour and facilities, which creates a fantastic atmosphere for horses to step up and gain experience.

Other wins saw William relegate his stable jockey Dan Moseley on the British-bred Billy Buttercup – they went on to win another class – and John Whitaker on Uniek.

Kannelle De La Baie was also a William winner, but Dan registered a landmark victory when the Animo sired nine-year-old Billy Grand to the fore in the final week's grand prix.

From a field of 54, British riders filled three of the top four places in the 13-horse jump-off with Dan on top and Tim Page's Quentin Tarantino third.

Five sec faster than Dan but at the expense of a pole, Nicky Boulter and Super Trooper De Ness were fourth to mark Old Lodge's nine-year-old Vigo D'Arsoilles son step up to international grand prix level.

"Rob, I'm waiting for the call!"
– Bruce Menzies

William rounded up his Spanish tour with a grand prix second on British-bred star Billy Congo.

Georgie Crumley had a winning run, eight-year-old mare Webalia G topping four big tour competitions. John Whitaker scored another four wins with Tadmus, Uniek and Titi D'Oase. Also big tour winners were Scott Smith (Laytender) and German-based Brit Guy Goosen (Cabrini 4).

Chloe Aston dominated the small tour, claiming over a dozen victories. Most notable was the invitational small grand prix with the consistent nine-year-old Kolibri Classic. This victory gave Chloe even more horsepower – she won a small motorbike.



2 0 1 1 WELSH MASTERS

Record-breaking entries were realised as competitors zeroed in on Wales for the first big outdoor meeting of the season. They were rewarded with four days of hot competition as the Wales and West showground was bathed in sunshine.

Just five days into their reunited partnership, Simon Crippen topped the PCA summer grand slam grand prix to take the Welsh Masters title with the scopey, big-striding Voss.

"He was strong at first, but is straight, doesn't spook and soon settled in" said Simon, who found Steve Williams's 1.50m – 1.60m jump-off – "a proper track."

Jo McGlory's Cameilo held an early lead despite challenges from John Whitaker (Argento), Scott Brash (Sebastian III) and Jemma Kirk (Wexford), but it was Tina Fletcher and Lord Harris's exciting Hello Unique that found a shorter route. However, Simon powered Andy and Alo Brake's Voss into the lead by two sec.

The pair won the Herts area trial in May 2010 on their last outing, and now the Voltaire stallion son has returned, Simon is looking at the bigger picture.

"He has loads of jump, I'm hoping for a promotional league team place" he said.

Keenly watching was performance manager Rob Hoekstra.

"The grand prix track was a little soft to get 19 clears, but it's early in the season" said Rob, who found the show a big success and the Carpetright arena fantastic, "We'll hopefully be seeing some of these horses in promotional Nations Cup teams, and a few will possibly make the step up to big league later in the season."

Sam Hutton commanded the Animo gents with the British-bred For A Smile, a Carnival Drum daughter bred by Anna Austin, from Tim Davies, second and third with Salome II and Valentijn O.

"She's scopey, careful and a consistent winner" said Sam, a member of the BEF world class programme, "As I land, I just look which way I want to turn and she does it."

Louise Pavitt took the ladies equivalent with Brendon Stud's Unbelievable Darco, who was taking a quick break from stud duties.

"He was a last-minute substitution for a horse with poison in its foot" said owner Shirley Light, who had spotted several of this 14-year-old's progeny competing at this show, "and this is his first outdoor show since July."

Louise claimed a second title for Brendon Stud in another fast, hotly-contended finale. Eight from 38 eventually contended the three-round, Equipoint five-year-old jump-off, but Louise had the winner's spot claimed early with Sussex Caretino with a daring flyer to the last.

This mare is a fourth generation home-bred by Caretino Glory. Out of a full sister to Hamilton Tropics, the mare traces back to Tropic Star – a former ride of Duncan Inglis.

"She's quick and light on her feet, I just had to make sure she knew she was taking out a stride to the last as she only five" said Louise.

Louise's sister Nicole headed the Welsh Masters six-year-old on Lisa Tudor's consistent Festiena Van Texelhof, 2010 five-year-old champion at Addington's British young horse championships.

"I thought she's be tired after jumping three clears yesterday [in the BS Business Partnership six-year-old], but she's blood enough and coped" said Nicole, "although she's not springing

off the floor quite as much."

The Bentley Van De Heffinck daughter can be buzzy.

"She finds it hard to switch off in the stable after she's worked" explained Nicole, who finds Cool Stance, a coconut-based food, helps enormously.

Cheshire-based Irishman Anthony Condon commandeered all seven and eight-year-old classes on Wild Thing. The first qualifier, HOYS qualifier and the final all fell to the unassailable pair.

"She's unbelievable and hasn't touched a fence all show" said Anthony, who had recently stepped up the eight-year-old Montreux daughter to middle-graded International classes in Hardelot, France.

A devastated Jemma Kirk lost all her tack – including four Devoucoux saddles – in a late-night robbery from her lorry, but gained a little compensation by winning the Andy Bills 1.25m title on Pieter in an incredible fast 35-horse jump-off.

"He's just bought a new bridle" said Jemma, who was on form with the Lord Z son, registering their fourth win in a fortnight. A victory in Vidauban, France, was followed by a double at the Wales and West meeting the previous week.

Steven Franks battled against 31 others in the NAF grade C, eventually taking the title on Karine Lorin's eight-year-old Pacome Du Bois Mesnil.

"I'm thrilled to have him, he's super-consistent and has grand prix potential" he said.