

FEI World Equestrian Games Stockholm (SWE), 1990



A bit of history

The idea behind the World Equestrian Games (WEG) came into being in the mid-1980's and was strongly supported, if not originally proposed, by HRH Prince Philip, the then-FEI President. The first WEG were proposed to take place in 1990 and the 1986 FEI General Assembly convening in Lisbon (POR), allocated the Games to Stockholm, although Rome was a very close runner-up. It may be that some of the voters remembered the excellent organisation of the equestrian events in Stockholm during the 1956 Olympic Games...

The first WEG, Stockholm 1990

It was decided to designate Stockholm's 1912 Olympic Stadium as the main arena for the 1990 WEG. It had, of course, undergone several reconstructions since 1912 and with the 1990 WEG in mind, the city authorities opted for a major renovation of the stadium.

No equestrian competition of comparable magnitude involving all six FEI disciplines had been organised prior to 1990. Moreover, given that Stockholm had not organised equestrian events for a number of years, the Organising Committee made good use of the time leading up to the Games and held test events in one or two disciplines each year. This careful preparation certainly contributed to the great success of the Games.

The successes of the 1990 WEG must also be attributed to the considerable involvement of the Swedish National Federation. The number of staff members working for the Games gradually increased and Ulf Rosengren, the Federation Secretary General, became the very successful Organising Committee Director.

From a sporting point of view, the 1990 WEG were a glorious success blessed with unbelievably fine weather. On the financial side, sponsorship income

surpassed the goals and the ticketing revenue turned out to be very impressive as all the disciplines attracted numerous spectators. Despite these positive results, no final surplus was achieved. The overall expense budget was exceeded partly due to the difficulty in planning for some items, but mainly because no expenses were spared in order to produce the perfect Games. A technical loss was also incurred because an original promise regarding VAT-issues had not been kept. This deficit was however covered by a state guarantee. It should nonetheless be noted that a study conducted after the Games showed that the 1990 WEG had produced a positive impact on the Stockholm economy. More importantly, the Games had a tremendous influence on the development of equestrian disciplines in Sweden.

Statistics

Dressage	68 Participants (22 countries)
Jumping	75 Participants started – 67 completed (26 Countries)
Eventing	84 Participants started – 60 completed (22 countries)
Driving	53 Participants – 41 completed (18 Countries)
Endurance	81 Participants – 35 completed (19 countries)
Vaulting	61 participants (15 countries)

A Total of **37** countries participated in the 1990 World Equestrian Games.

Interesting Facts

France dominated in the show jumping arena at these inaugural World Equestrian Games in Stockholm where Eric Navet claimed the individual honours and joined team-mates Hubert Bourdy, Roger-Yves Bost and Pierre Durand to take the team title.

Prior to the introduction of the WEG, Show Jumping World Championships had been staged for individuals since 1953 but women were only permitted to take part for the first time in 1978 while, in that same year, the team competition was also introduced.

Navet realised the dreams for many generations of his family when he was victorious with the stallion Quito de Baussy, bred by his father Alain at the Haras de Baussy in Calvados, Normandy. This was particularly significant given that the change-horse individual final included some of the greatest equine legends of all time including the duo of magnificent greys, Milton and Gem Twist.

It was the latter, owned by Michael Golden and bred and trained by Frank Chapot, that left America's Greg Best at the top of the order after the first three competitions when Gem Twist, in 12th place after the speed leg, went on to jump clear in both rounds of the team and top-20 competitions. By that time a total of 70 fences had been tackled, leaving another 40 for the final afternoon, of which 30 would be on unfamiliar horses and riding at speed.

Navet was second going into the final day when all four riders began again on a zero score but the only horse with which he incurred a fence-penalty was his own, as he brought Gem Twist and team-mate Hubert Bourdy's Morgat home without incident while collecting just a quarter time penalty with John Whitaker's Milton.

Best, on the other hand, failed to complete a single clear round in the final competition which tests horsemanship to the limit as riders must quickly adapt to, and sympathise with, horses they have never sat on before. Silver medallists at the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, Best and Gem Twist knocked a rail but Gem Twist earned the title of "World's Best Horse" that afternoon when his only other mistake was with Bourdy.

It was Great Britain's Whitaker who lined up in silver medal position ahead of Bourdy in bronze while Best finished individually fourth as did the US team which also included Joan Scharffenberger (Victor), Anne Kursinski (Starman) and Joe Fargis (Mill Pearl).

The course designer in Stockholm was Olaf Petersen, whose flair and innovation had already made a big impression in Seoul. The Stockholm track had a distinctly Swedish theme. He set out to "gladden the eye of spectators without distracting the horses from their sporting duties" and succeeded, although in the Nations Cup the water jump proved hugely influential as practically every third horse made a mistake there. A total of 16 countries competed, 15 with full teams and Italy with just three riders, and from a starting field of 75, only four partnerships managed to complete double-clear rounds including Navet (Quito de Baussy), Best (Gem Twist), Belgium's Ludo Philippaerts (Darco) and Switzerland's Thomas Fuchs (Dollar Girl), while Britain's Michael Whitaker (Mon Santa) picked up just a quarter time fault.

Despite a 16-fault result for Roger-Yves Bost (Norton de Rhuys), the French were victorious in the team event, greatly assisted by Navet's excellence and with just a single first-round error from Bourdy and 4.75 faults for Seoul Olympic champions Pierre Durand and Jappeloup.

The German team, composed of Karsten Huck (Nepomuk), Rene Tebbel (Borsu Urchin), Otto Becker (Optiebeurs Pamina) and Ludger Beerbaum (Almox Gazelle) were awarded silver while Great Britain's team composed of Nick Skelton (Grand Slam), Michael Whitaker (Mon Santa), David Broome (Lannegan) and John Whitaker (Milton) took the bronze medal home.

Just days before the opening of the first World Equestrian Games, a video of horses being "rapped" was released causing huge consternation both within and outside equestrian circles. In spite of this, Stockholm WEG 1990 proved a triumph for horse sport and show jumping in particular as French Chef d'Equipe, Patrick Caron, led a team that included riders, owners, sponsors and the French sporting authorities to a memorable and emphatic double-victory.