

FEI World Equestrian Games Jerez de la Frontera (ESP), 2002



When the fourth World Equestrian Games were staged in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain in 2002, the future of the fixture was hanging in the balance; a natural response to a rather chequered history. Another disaster would definitely put an end to the event; the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Europe in 2001 did nothing to boost confidence in its survival. However this time, the equestrian community breathed a sigh of relief, when sufficient financial backing and thorough organization led to a very successful edition of the World Equestrian Games. Indeed, Jerez 2002 kicked off in style and was afterwards hailed a great success. A success which proved that, when well organised; they are truly the crown of the FEI Championships.

For the first time, the WEG included seven disciplines with Reining making a strong and most appreciated first appearance. The sport was of the highest quality although the Endurance event suffered from horrible weather and, as a result, other major problems only partly connected to the adverse conditions arose. The great spectator attendance and the attention from the media brought considerable benefits to the host city as well as the whole province.

Moreover, Andalusia, the Spanish province where Jerez is located, is a true horse country enjoying a rich equestrian tradition going back centuries. Jerez is the city of the *Real Escuela Andaluza del Arte Ecuestre* (Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art), a major ambassador for the area.

Statistics

Dressage	65 participants (24 countries)
Jumping	97 participants (37 countries)
Eventing	80 participants started – 50 completed (21 countries)
Driving	43 participants (17 countries)
Endurance	150 participants started – 64 completed (36 countries)
Reining	49 participants started – 29 completed (11 countries)
Vaulting	67 participants (20 countries)

A Total of **48** Countries participated in the 2002 World Equestrian Games.

The countries participating for the first time were: Colombia, Guatemala, India, Jordan, Philippines, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Uruguay.

Interesting Facts

Amazing Frenchman, Eric Navet, already had four WEG medals in his trophy cabinet; team and individual gold from Stockholm in 1990 and team silvers from The Hague in 1994 and Rome in 1998. The 2002 WEG yet again provided him with two more medals; the first for finishing second individually and the other medal for his team, for whom his contribution was invaluable.

Ireland's Dermott Lennon took the world by surprise when the quiet farmer's son claimed the individual honours with his great mare Liscalgot, while Sweden's Helena Lundback became the second woman, following in the footsteps of Gail Greenough (Aachen 1986), to earn a place in the change-horse final with her little mare Mynta. Mares were to the fore again in the individual final with Liscalgot and Mynta joined by American rider Peter Wylde's Fein Cera, but Navet's Dollar du Murier was one of the four super-stallions that did French horse-breeding proud as they soared to victory in the team competition.

France established the lead after the first speed leg, with Germany at this stage lying second ahead of Sweden but, in the final analysis, there were to be no medals for the German side chasing their third consecutive team title. They finished fourth behind the Belgians who rose meteorically from 11th place after the initial competition to take bronze while the Swedes claimed silver. A total of 97 riders and 21 teams lined out, and after the first day individual glory seemed a long way off for Lennon who was lying in 26th spot.

Switzerland's Markus Fuchs and Tinka's Boy were quickest over the first course designed by Avelino Rodriguez Miravalles with Frenchman Eric Lavallois and Diamant de Semilly Ecolit in second ahead of Ludger Beerbaum and Gladdys S - the partnership much-fancied to challenge defending champion Rodrigo Pessoa for the individual title. As it turned out, neither of the favourites fared too well; Gladdys dislodging her rider in the third competition and the Brazilian's stallion Baloubet du Rouet becoming uncooperative in the second round of the Nations Cup.

With no first-round clears in the team competition, Germany began to slip away, while the Swedes moved up when Royne Zetterman's single error with Richmond Park was the only blot on an otherwise clean sheet as Lundback (Mynta), Peter Eriksson (Cardento) and Malin Baryard (Butterfly Flip) kept the score at zero. Reynald Angot (Tlaloc M) produced the only clear French performance first time out but with just one time fault for Navet and Dollar du Murier and a single fence error from Levallois and Diamant the 16-fault score of Gilles Bertran de Balanda (Crocus Graverie) could be discarded. It was Angot who found himself in trouble with 19 faults in round two but clears from Levallois and Navet allowed Balanda's much improved four-fault result complete their tally as they outmanoeuvred the Swedes for gold by more than seven points. Only one further point kept the Belgians at bay in bronze position as they stormed in with a late run when Stanny Van Paesschen (O de Pomme), Peter Postelmans (Oleander) and Jos Lansink (AK Caridor Z) got it exactly right at their second attempt. The Netherlands finished fifth behind

Germany while the United States were sixth and US rider Nicole Simpson had a day she will never forget. Zirka Z jammed on the brakes at fence eight but there was no buzzer because of an electricity failure so the rider continued on and left the arena only to be called back to start again at the fence at which she had earlier ground to a halt. Team manager Frank Chapot was clearly unimpressed by the way the situation was handled but Simpson was none the worse when lowering only one fence in round two.

Lundback was the real surprise package by making it to the final day, having only received her call-up for the Swedish side after European team silver and individual bronze medallist Rolf-Goran Bengtsson lost the ride on Pialotta and Helen Persson's horse was out of action. Her presence in the closing stages attracted plenty of media interest and the question on everyone's lips was - how were the other riders going to cope with her mare that appeared to be quite a handful to ride? As it turned out, however, it was Navet's Dollar du Murier and Lennon's Liscalgot who created most of the excitement while Fein Cera turned out to be just the kind of classy lady she always appeared to be as she obliged with clean rounds for everyone, although the Swede collected three time faults with her and two more on Dollar du Murier while a fence down with her own horse and three mistakes with Liscalgot put her chances of a medal position to rest.

In the end it was Lennon's quiet horsemanship that won the day. The man who hails from near Banbridge in County Down in the north of Ireland but who has been based in Holland for a number of years has spent much of his life breaking and training young horses at home and introducing them into the sport. Assisted by fellow team-member, Peter Charles and Irish Chef d'Equipe Tommy Wade, he did the minimum amount in the warm-up area and left each horse to execute its own style in the ring, faulting only with Mynta who left one on the floor for all four riders. Lennon's mare put paid to Navet's dream of yet another individual gold but when Wylde faulted once with each of the strange horses, the Frenchman earned silver while the American took bronze.