



FEI World Equestrian Games
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Aachen 2006



**If You Can Make it here...
You can Make it Anywhere!**

By Ina El Kobbia - Germany

The 5th World Equestrian Games got off to a spectacular start with a stunning opening ceremony on the 20th of August 2006; the perfect beginning for two action-packed weeks of elite equestrian sport covering seven disciplines.

Aachener Soers, the world's most esteemed equestrian ground, in the German city of Aachen regularly hosts the CHIO Aachen, which riders deem the most challenging tournament in the world. This time it surmounted another hurdle to host the 2006 World Equestrian Games. With an allocated budget of 39.3 million Euros, a dramatic reconstruction has been carried out to accommodate the event. The show ground has three stadiums; the main stadium allows for an incomparable capacity of 40,000 spectators, who are treated to a breathtaking view over the arena. Additionally, amazing ground preparation was undertaken to include a new specially designed grass mix to ensure the best possible footing for the horses.

Moreover, a radiant and devoting new F.E.I. President took the masses in Aachen by storm; H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein proved herself admirably well not only as the new President of the International Equestrian Federation, but also as a wonderful representative and beautiful image of the Arab World on the international circuit!



H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein,
the new President of the International
Equestrian Federation.

Photo by Kit Houghton, F.E.I.



Gold and Bronze medallists German Isabell Werth & Satchmo greeting their crowd.

Photo by Eva K.-Schubert

In an enthusiastic and unifying opening speech H.R.H. Princess Haya declared the 5th World Equestrian Games open. The Princess, who was overwhelmingly well received at her first World Games as President of the F.E.I. is truly her father's daughter, the unforgettable late King Hussein of Jordan. She shares much of his outstanding charisma and perfect sense of diplomacy and sensitivity for the needs of people. Having myself attended a special press conference given by the Princess at the World Equestrian Games in Aachen; one cannot but express admiration for a beautiful young woman who quickly captured the hearts and minds of the international media and the horse world in a pleasant and skilful way. The Princess has prepared herself well for change in

the work and policy of the F.E.I., which has long been called for. In her presentation to the press she left no doubts about her goals and her determination to fulfil her promises. It is obvious that as an athlete herself for many years now, she knows very well about the needs of horses & riders and is well prepared to take up their points of concern. Additionally, the strengthening of the National Federations, especially the weaker National Equestrian Federations as well as the increase of popularity, transparency and competitiveness of the horse sport as against other sports are definite priorities that she has set for her presidential term. To those present at the press conference something else became apparent, the Princess is very much considered a

representative of the Arab world, especially of the female Arab World. As such she was confronted with several questions concerning the role of Arab women. Princess Haya made clear that there are many modern and dynamic Arab women other than herself and members of her family, however it was not for her alone but for the international media to take pride in determining and reporting about them as well.

Getting back to the prestigious horse competitions of the world's best, the first medals of the Games were granted to the competitors of endurance racing. Horses and riders had to overcome a difficult course of 160km passing parts of Germany, Netherlands and Belgium. Next to very good quality horses the right

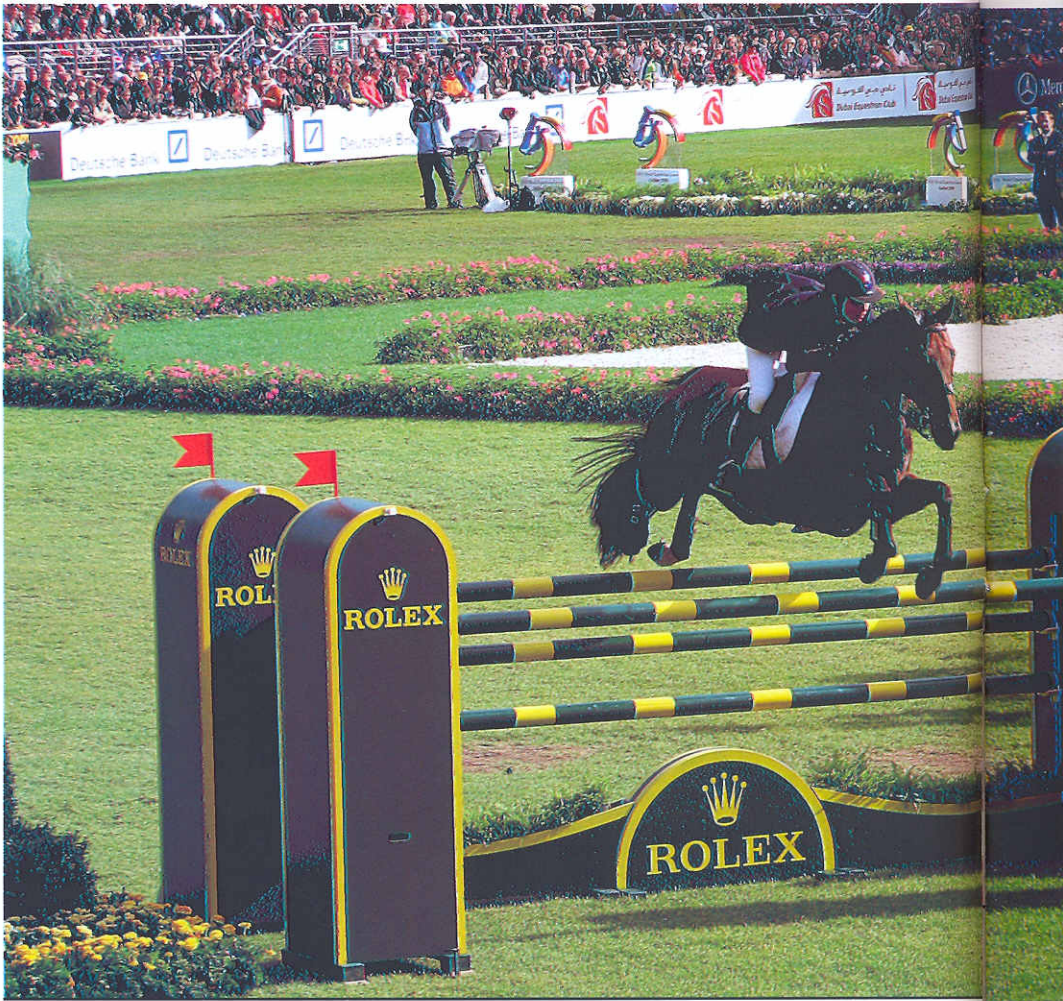


Favourites of the crowd: Danish dressage champions Andreas Helgstrand & young mare Matine!
Photo by Eva K.-Schubert

strategy is vital to manage such a tour. It was again the talented French team that proved its strength well and took the team gold medal followed by the team silver medal for the Swiss. The Portuguese team surprised many and took the bronze medal. The vet checks at these World Games were tightened up to safeguard the horses given the tragic fact that two horses passed away due to exhaustion at the last World Games 2002 in Jerez.

Spanish rider Miguel Vila Ubach couldn't believe his success: aboard his grey Arabian gelding he entered the arena first after 160km, 9 hours, 12 minutes and 27 seconds. The new World Champion in endurance racing was in tears and declared later on that he had dreamt of winning this title ever since he had become European champion back in 1999. The second and third place went to the two French female riders Virginie Atger and Elodie Le Labourier. The best individual Arab rider at this discipline was Sheikh Duaij Bin Salman Al Khalifa from Bahrain. He took ninth place and thereby placed himself well amongst the top ten in the world. In total, 159 riders from 41 nations started this competition whereby seven Arab countries were represented (Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates).

Dressage was a highlight for Germany; unbeaten until today Germany took its tenth team gold medal. The German team consisting of Heike Kemmer on 'Bonaparte', Isabell Werth on her horse 'Satchmo', Nadine Capellmann aboard 'Elvis' and finally Hubertus Schmidt on his mare 'Wansuela Suerte' achieved a total score of 223.625. It was noted that all horses of the German team carry the



At the finals, Australia's best female rider Edwina Alexander. Photo by J. Beck

famous Hanoverian brand. The Team Netherlands took second place with 217.917 scores followed by the team from the USA with a total number of 213.917.

For the first time individual medals were granted for the dressage discipline of 'Grand Prix Special'. The best couple was German Isabell Werth and her horse 'Satchmo'. "It was my best ride ever", Isabell Werth commented as she was still overwhelmed by her horse. World famous Dutch Anky van Grunsven took second on her Hanoverian 'Salinero' followed by a strong Danish couple Andreas Helgstrand on his just nine years old Danish brad mare 'Matine'. Dressage came to a conclusion with breathtaking freestyle to music. More than 40.000 spectators in the arena watched the fifteen best riders presenting their 'Kur'. It was Dutch Anky van Grunsven and the Hanoverian 'Salinero' who received the highest scores. The presentation of the couple was smooth and energetic, whereby there was no end halt, still the charismatic duo danced its way to the gold medal. The favourite of the crowd was Danish Andreas Helgstrand aboard his young Danish brad mare 'Matine'. Helgstrand presented a difficult new kur. His young mare impressed everybody by phenomenal piaffe and passage. The couple was granted the silver medal. German Isabell Werth and 'Satchmo'



Gold for the best in jumping: Jos Lansink & Cavalor Cumano.
Photo by J. Beck

presented a very nice kur, yet did not perform spectacular enough for another gold medal, but still managed an honourable third place.

Another exciting discipline at the World Games is eventing. At the Olympics in Athens Germany most tragically lost all its gold medals, this time the team around Bettina Hoy took revenge and made it to the gold medal. Zara Philipps, granddaughter of Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth II, took the individual gold medal in eventing for Great Britain. In a moving statement she devoted her medal to her



Princess Haya & German Chancellor Angela Merkel supporting therapeutic riding.

Photo by J.Beck



Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum riding towards the Mercedes-Benz Fence.

Photo by J.Beck

late friend Sherelle Duke, who died aged 28 only a week ago on the 20th of August when her horse toppled on top of her while competing in England.

Show jumping truly captured the masses. Team Jumping ended with the gold medal for the Netherlands who achieved an unreachable lead. The United States and its best rider Beezie Madden took the silver medal. At the beginning of these Games the German jumping team was considered to be the strongest team and a gold medal seemed to be likely, however the facts came out differently. The team didn't prove it was at its best. Foremost, the world's no. 1 Marcus Ehning and his mare 'Kuechengirl' couldn't gel with each other. After two riding mistakes the grand stylist wasn't able to gain back the confidence of his horse and had to give up at the end, leaving Germany with a number of mistakes. Therefore the German team was very lucky to take the bronze medal. Essentially Ludger Beerbaum and Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum were the strongest riders in the German team.

The last day of the World Equestrian Games in Aachen was granted to the individual finals in reining and show jumping. In a dramatic tie break Canadian Duane Latimer took the gold medal in reining ahead of Tim McQuay from the USA. The last gold medals of the 2006

Endurance Racing: seven Arab countries were represented (Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates).



Farewell Aachen 2006, welcome Kentucky 2010.

Photo by J.Beck

Games were to the sympathetic Belgium show jumper Jos Lansink and his wonderful Holstein stallion 'Cavalor Cumano', each coming in at first place as best rider and best horse! There were only four riders left for the individual finals

in jumping with change of horses: 3 female riders and one male rider. At the end it was Jos Lansink who remained clear in all rounds. Equally his stallion stood clear though with different riders on board. Second was the talented rider Beezie Madden from the USA. American born Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum, wife of the younger brother of Ludger Beerbaum, achieved a well deserved third place for Germany along with her Hanoverian 'Shutterfly'. Edwina Alexander and her Westphalian horse 'Pialotta' (a wonderful horse with a height of just 1.60) made Australia's flag fly high in the arena by taking an excellent fourth place amongst the worlds best.

At the very end, in an emotional speech the F.E.I. President H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein brought the 5th World Equestrian Games 2006 Aachen to a close and compelled her audience to look ahead to welcome the 6th World Equestrian Games 2010 in Kentucky! **HT**