

JEROEN DUBBELDAM DOUBLE VICTORY FOR ONE CHAMPION

By Engy Adham



LAUGHTER AND CHEERS ECHOED IN THE SKY OF AACHEN THE MOMENT JEROEN DUBBELDAM CLEARED THE FENCES WINNING THE EUROPEAN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM GOLD AT THE FEI EUROPEAN JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015.

"I simply cannot believe it – after winning double gold at the World Championships last year and now double European Championships gold. It is too good to be true. I am simply overjoyed," said Dubbeldam. *"If you come here to Aachen, one of the most difficult places you can have for a championship, but also one of the nicest, then you know it is going to be a tough battle,"* he added.

Since 1994, Dubbeldam has taken the lead in building up a significant record of achievements starting with winning a European Individual Gold and a Team Bronze. The year 2000 marks his international breakthrough winning the Olympic Gold medal with De Sjiem in Sydney, Australia.

Last year, Dubbeldam won the individual and team gold medal at the World Championships.

The individual European title has not been won by the Netherlands since John Heins won it in 1977 in Vienna. Not only has Dubbeldam achieved regional victories, but also he won the individual gold medal for the World Equestrian Games 2014 in Normandy. Moreover, no athlete worldwide has ever achieved two titles: regional and international,

at the same time in 24 years.

"It is daunting walking into such an impressive arena! In the morning, when you go in to have a look with it empty, the whole place is empty and you can really see it for what it is. Every time you hear of a championship you know they are going to be big and every time you hear of Aachen, you know it is going to be big, so when you put the both of them together you have really got a big course and a big challenge," Dubbeldam added.

"The FEI Awards are incredibly important to equestrian sport, and there is a category dedicated to every member of our community that makes this sport a reality," Dubbeldam said. *"We are all dependent on each other to get to the next level in equestrian sport - it is truly a team effort,"* he continued.

Course designer Frederic Cottier also complimented Dubbeldam for the skill he showed in the FEI European Jumping Championships. *"I wanted this championship to be different from the last two at Aachen and Kentucky where it came down to a jump-off,"* he said. *"I wanted the competition to be more complex. I did not want a jump-off and I succeeded in that. The fact that all four horses jumped so well and that even the oldest one, who is 15, was still in great shape today is proof of the success of the courses during the week. And special congratulations to Jeroen, who was under such pressure today, he really is a tremendous champion!"*

The FEI European Championships left the riders and the crowd in suspense 'till the last gasp of the competition. *"Yes, I must say the pressure was pretty high! My own horse put me under this pressure because he jumped a clear round*

with Patrice, but I must say in that round, with my horse in it, I was really happy he did a clear round, because this horse brought me so much this week and he really deserved to finish this tournament with a clear round. I am very happy that his last round in this stadium was clear, I am very proud of him," Dubbeldam said.

Although a cheering crowd could encourage the rider to do a better jump, the horse might require a different atmosphere to perform at its best. *"I had to ask the crowd to be a bit quiet, but this is nothing I like to do because I love this. But sometimes we have this problem so we try to find a balance between enthusiasm and horsemanship, but I think in the end everything went well,"* Dubbeldam adds.

Dubbeldam grew up with a rooted passion to this sport coming from a horse-loving family. Today, Dubbeldam lives in Weerselo with his wife Monique and his two sons Rick and Chris and his daughter Nina. His wife and family have always been a great support. His love for this sport is crowned by sharing a business with his wife; together, they run their stable that is named after Dubbeldam's legendary gray gelding: The Sjiem. He dedicates the stables to the training and education of young horses. Among all the horses Dubbeldam has ridden, his favourite horses are De Sjiem, Simon, Nassau and Up and Down.

'Be a horseman' - a philosophy that travels with Dubbeldam from the first fence until the podium; from the training rings to the most prestigious championships. Despite the significant achievements Dubbeldam has accomplished, he still dreams of winning team gold medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. 

Jeroen Dubbeldam at the WEG2014