

ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP™ JUMPING 2009/2010

IT'S LADIES DAY AT LEIPZIG - AND A THREE-TIMER FOR JESSICA

January 24, Leipzig: The ladies dominated the line-up at the eighth leg of the Rolex FEI World Cup™ series in Leipzig, Germany today where Ireland's Jessica Kuerten produced a devastating burst of speed to pip runner-up Edwina Alexander from Australia and third-placed Frenchwoman Penelope Leprevost in a 16-way jump-off. The girls simply out-galoped the boys against the clock, and this was a particularly notable victory for Kuerten who also won this leg of the series in both 2008 and 2009 and so made it a Leipzig hat-trick today.

Frank Rothenberger's first-round track produced plenty of clear rounds but the big questions were all posed in the jump-off. Riders had some tough decisions to make as the snaking second-round course asked for some super-tight turns. As it emerged however, it was simply the exceptional speed of Kuerten's Castle Forbes Libertina that would win the day.

BIG IMPRESSION

Kenneth Cheng, the 22 year old rider from Hong Kong who made such a big impression at last summer's Olympic Games, was first out in the timed round with the aptly-named Jockey Club Can Do. The 11 year old horse was courageous and willing all the way but, asked to stand a very long way off the oxer at fence six, he hit that for four faults in 42.75 seconds. That would prove a competitive time however.

Australia's Philipp Lever and the grey, Ashleigh Drossel Dan, were next to go and showed they too were well up to the challenge when producing a lovely clear to set the new target in 45.04. Sweden's Svante Johansson had two down with Saint Amour while Portugal's Luciana Diniz and Winningmood left the vertical at fence four on the floor, but Germany's Lars Nieberg increased the pressure when returning fault-free with Levito in 42.98 seconds to a great roar of encouragement from the crowd.

Piergiorgio Bucci's Kanebo clearly didn't mean to refuse at the second fence but couldn't believe he was being asked to jump it at such an acute angle and the Italian pair came home with six faults on the board, while Germany's Max Kuhner was looking good right up to the final Rolex oxer only to lose it all there with Coeur du Lion who crashed through for four faults in 43.84. His fellow-countryman Philipp Weishaupt however was foot-perfect when demoting Nieberg from pole position with a great run in 42.21 seconds. His advantage didn't last long though, as Marco Kutscher's four-fault effort with Cornet Obolensky was immediately followed by a scorching round from Penelope Leprevost.

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DARE-DEVIL

The key to the Frenchwoman's edge was her dare-devil turn after the double which brought Mylord Carthago home in 41.13 seconds, and when home star Ludger Beerbaum failed to threaten that as he galloped through the finish in 41.96 seconds it seemed some serious risk-taking would be required to oust the French partnership from pole position. There would be another Australian clear however, and as Edwina Alexander shaved almost a full second off the target with a fabulous round from the diminutive Cevo Itot du Chateau there were only four more left to go - and plenty of excitement still to come.

The Netherlands' Gerco Schroder and Eurocommerce New Orleans picked up eight faults but, third-last into the ring, Marcus Ehning set his home crowd alight with a thrilling run from Plot Blue that would very likely have challenged for the win if they had mastered the turn after the penultimate double. Leprevost executed this perfectly, cutting inside the vertical that stood in the way of a clear run to the last, but Ehning very nearly collided with the upright and lost precious fractions of seconds before untangling himself and racing down to cross the finish-line in 41.19 seconds.

THOUGHT ABOUT IT

Kuerten thought about it long and hard before she set off. She knows she is riding arguably the fastest show jumping horse in the world, and Castle Forbes Libertina returned to action after a seven-month injury layoff with all the joie de vivre that makes her such a sensation to finish second in the



The winner of the Leipzig leg of the Rolex FEI World Cup™, Ireland's Jessica Kürten, is presented with a Rolex watch by Anthony Schaub from Rolex. Photo: Dirk Caremans.

continued

Rolex FEI World Cup™ Jumping qualifier at Mechelen in Belgium just after Christmas. "I didn't like the look of the turn after the double, so I took a line that nobody else, except Delestre, tried to do between the first two fences and it paid off" she explained afterwards. Her new route gave her some leeway later on the track so she let Libertina do what she does best, taking the longer route to the final oxer but galloping like the wind all the way. And when Delestre and Napoli du Ry left two fences on the floor the victory was an Irish one.

The German crowd was more than happy to celebrate the victory of the rider who has made Germany her home for many years now and, like Kuerten, they applauded her brilliant 14 year old mare. "She was smooth and fast and absolutely brilliant!" Kuerten said afterward, "I'm so happy with her!".

This result now shoots her up to second position on the Rolex FEI World Cup™ Jumping leaderboard which continues to be headed by Holland's Eric Van der Vleuten, and with 51 points to her credit Kuerten is well-qualified for the series final in Geneva in April. For those who have not quite made the cut yet there are still five more qualifiers remaining, and the next thriller is set to take place in Zurich, Switzerland next weekend.

Result:

- 1, Castle Forbes Libertina (Jessica Kuerten) Irl 0/0 40.52;
- 2, Cevo Itot du Chateau (Edwina Alexander) Aus 0/0 40.71;
- 3, Mylord Carthago (Penelope Lereprevost) Fra 0/0 41.13;
- 4, Plot Blue (Marcus Ehning) Ger 0/0;
- 5, Couleur Rubin (Ludger Beerbaum) Ger 0/0 41.96;
- 6, Catoki (Philipp Weishaupt) Ger 0/0 42.21;
- 7, Levito (Lars Nieberg) Ger 0/0 42.98;
- 8, Ashleigh Drossel Dan (philipp Lever) Aus 0/0 45.04;
- 9, Jockey Club Can Do (Kenneth Cheng) HKG 0/4 42.75;
- 10, Coeur de Lion (Max Kuhner) Ger 0/4 43.84;
- 11, Cornet Obolensky (Marco Kutscher) Ger 0/4 44.12;
- 12, Winningmood (Luciana Diniz) Por 0/4 46.83;
- 13, Kanebo (Piergiorgio Bucci) Ita 0/6 58.31;
- 14, Napoli du Ry (Simon Delestre) Fra 0/8 41.08;
- 15, Svante Johansson Swe 0/8 46.74;
- 16, Eurocommerce New Orleans (Gerco Schroder) Ned 0/8 52.05.

Full results at www.engage.de

ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP™ JUMPING - Standings after Round 8 at Leipzig, Germany:

1. Eric Van der Vleuten - 57
2. Jessica Kuerten - 51
3. Pius Schwizer - 48

4. Penelope Lereprevost - 47
5. Ludger Beerbaum - 46
6. Kevin Staut - 46
7. Marcus Ehning - 44
8. Natale Chiaudani - 44
9. Rodrigo Pessoa - 41
10. Daniel Etter - 40
11. Marco Kutscher - 40
12. Philipp Weishaupt - 40
13. Michael Whitaker - 39
14. Edwina Alexander - 34
15. Albert Zoer - 29
16. Patrice Deleveau - 29
17. Patrick McEntee - 28
18. Dermott Lennon - 28
18. Ben Maher - 28
20. Svante Johansson - 24

Facts and Figures:

This was the third consecutive year for Ireland's Jessica Kuerten to win the Rolex FEI World Cup™ Qualifier at Leipzig.

A total of 9,000 spectators enjoyed today's competition.

A total of 16 riders jumped clear to go into the second-round jump-off.

The first three places went to lady riders.

Great Britain's Ellen Whitaker was unlucky to miss out on the jump-off when picking up just a single first-round time penalty with Equimax Ocolado.

A total of 14 horses made a single mistake in the first round. Three riders retired - Germany's Felix Hassmannn (Horse Gym's Lianos), Denmark's Thomas Velin (Godsend du Reverdy) and Austria's Thomas Fruhmman (The Sixth Sense).

QUOTES:

Edwina Alexander who finished second with Itot du Chateau - "In the jump-off there was nothing I could do but to ride as quickly as I could - and I couldn't have gone any faster!"

Jessica Kuerten, when asked what her plans are for the 2010 season "We are not making any big plans right now, we'll just keep jumping and see how it goes".

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR WESTERN EUROPEAN LEAGUE: 1, Oslo (Norway) 9-11 October; 2, Helsinki (Finland) 15-18 October; 3, Lyon (FRA) 28 Oct-1 November; 4, Verona (Italy) 5-8 November; 5, Stuttgart (Germany) 15-22 November; 6, London-Olympia (Great Britain) 15-21 December; 7, Mechelen (Belgium) 26-30 December; 8, Leipzig (Germany) 21-24 January; 9, Zurich (SUI) 28-31 January; 10, Bordeaux (France) 5-7 February; 11, Vigo (Spain) 11-14 February; 12, Gothenburg (Sweden) 25-28 February; 13, s'Hertogenbosch (The Netherlands) 25-28 March; FINAL - Geneva (Switzerland) 14-18 April.

Broadcast Schedule can be downloaded from www.feeworldcup.org