



# Bravo for a great Italian job

**FAILTE IRELAND DUBLIN, BALLSBRIDGE**

**5-9 August**

By Louise Parkes

THE future of British show jumping was still hanging in the balance as Dublin drew to a close.

The sole mission for the British side was to ensure survival in the Meydan FEI Nations Cup series for 2010. But despite a valiant joint second place in this final leg, that could not be confirmed due to a muddle over the relegation rules (see box and news page four).

Italy pulled off an enormous surprise when winning Friday's Nations Cup. Complete underdogs — and certain of relegation having picked up only four points throughout the previous seven legs of the series — they came to Dublin with nothing to lose.

Spurred on by their new coach and manager Markus Fuchs, they put in an inspired performance.

Alan Wade's course-design skills came in for high praise all week, with Peter Charles describing his Nations Cup track as "a masterpiece".

"There were no crashes or dramas, just a straight-forward jumping test," said Peter. "A lot of the course-designers use the clock as a weapon against the riders, but Alan just made us work — a lot of shortening and lengthening and good strong fences — the way it should be."

The USA and Italy shared the

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**Peter Charles praising the course design for the Nations Cup in Dublin**



**The victorious Italian team — winning the Dublin Nations Cup for only the fourth time in its 83-year history — celebrate with their manager Markus Fuchs**



lead at halfway with just four faults apiece, while Britain and Germany were next carrying eight.

Ben Maher (Robin Hood W), Geoff Billington (Rosinus) and Peter Charles (Murka's Pom D'Ami) each came home with a single error. Ben lowered the first element of the bogey double at fence five, while Geoff and Peter fell foul of the difficult penultimate treble.

Tim Stockdale and Fresh Direct Corlato, however, produced one of just seven clears to keep Britain well in touch.

The Italians proved their first-

round result was no fluke when Juan Carlos Garcia (Hamilton De Perhet), Giuseppe D'Onofrio (Landzeu Z) and Natale Chiaudani (Snai Seldana) recorded single errors second time out.

The Swiss improved rapidly, following clears from Pius Schwizer (Carlina) and Beat Mandli (Louis). Ben Maher's path-finding second-round clear anchored the British score at 16 when his team-mates all left just one on the floor.

So the pressure was on Italy's final rider Piorgiorgio Bucci. He brought Kanebo home without



Juan Carlos Garcia and Hamilton De Perhet produce one of only seven first-round clears in the Nations Cup en route to Italy's famous victory

incident to clinch a historic victory and the coveted Aga Khan Cup for Italy — for only the fourth time in the 83-year history of Nations Cup jumping at Dublin.

Markus Fuchs was asked how he had coaxed such a miraculous result from the team that was given odds of 100-1 by the bookies going into this final leg.

"It was just our day today," he said. "I pushed hard to get all the best riders to this show, because I knew that if we all pulled together we could produce a good result and that would be a big motivation before Windsor."

#### Grand prix goes to Germany

PETER CHARLES, who recorded Britain's only win in the six-bar with Murka's Rupert R, took a nose-dive when Murka's Pall Mall H made a mistake at the water during the Longines grand prix.

Germany's Toni Hassmann scooped the €66,500 winner's prize after an 11-strong second-round jump-off.

Tim Stockdale and Ben Maher made the cut, the former clipping the vertical three from home to finish 10th. Ben produced a brilliant double clear with Robin Hood W but was just over four

## Confusion over Britain's place

FOURTH-placed France claimed the overall 2009 Meydan FEI Nations Cup title. Uncharacteristically, they floundered in the first round but rallied brilliantly second time out.

"I'm happy with how they coped with the pressure," said chef d'equipe Laurent Elias.

Joint-second place with Switzerland in Dublin left Britain on equal points with Belgium at the end of the series. But initially it was announced that Britain would be the second of the 10 competing nations to be demoted to the Promotional League for 2010 (see news page four).

Shortly afterwards, however, that decision was reversed and confusion reigned as FEI officials confirmed that the rules would have to be re-examined. It was a bitter blow after a brave British effort.

"I'm very proud of the fight we put up today," said Tim Stockdale.

Peter Charles added: "If we go down, it wasn't for lack of trying."

"We lose a helluva lot if we go down to the second division — all the big money and opportunities," said Geoff Billington. "The Meydan series is the world stage, and we want to be on it."

seconds off the German's super-fast winning time to slot into fifth.

Toni's winning ride, Lolita, is only just back in action after more than two years' struggle, following colic operations and leg problems.

The Swiss were in fine form here when Pius Schwizer claimed second with Carlina and Beat Mandli was third with the nine-year-old Louis — a gelding he sold as a four-year-old who has found his way back to him.

The leading international rider title went to the incomparable Frenchman Roger-Yves Bost. He recorded a hat-trick here with the 12-year-old Jovis De Ravel. It might have been four but for a timing hiccup in the Knight Frank speed, in which he was runner-up to Egypt's Abdel Said.

Capt Shane Carey was leading Irish rider after his win on the opening day, joint victory in the Land Rover puissance and third in the Walls speed championship —

all with River Foyle.

The puissance wall defeated all five who made it into the fifth and final round of the thrilling class, in which Holland's Jur Vrieling took a spectacular fall from Pegasus. And young Irish talent Alex Duffy was saved from hitting the dirt when his gallant little grey, Courtown, pushed him back into the saddle after they hit the 2.20m red-brick monster. H&H

### Results

**Meydan FEI Nations Cup.** — 1, Italy (Hamilton De Perhet (J C Garcia) 0+4, Landzeu 2 (G D Onofrio) 9+4, Snai Seldana (N Chiaudani) 0+4, Kanebo (P Bucci), 4+0); 2eq, Switzerland (Carlina IV (P Schwizer) 4+0, Louis 162 (B Mandli) 4+0, Radja Van T Arkelhof (N Rutschi) 8+8, Cantus (N Schurtenberger) 4+4, & Great Britain (Robin Hood W (B Maher) 4+0, Rosinus (G Billington) 4+4, Fresh Direct Corlato (T Stockdale) 0+4, Murka's Porm D'Ami (P Charles) 4+4). **Longines International grand prix.** — 1, Lolita H (T Hassman, GER); 2, Carlina IV (P Schwizer, SUI); 3, Louis 162 (B Mandli, SUI); 4, Kanebo (P Bucci, ITA); 4, Robin Hood W (B Maher, GBR); 10, Fresh Direct Corlato (T Stockdale, GBR).



Tim Stockdale and Fresh Direct Corlato put in a strong performance in the Nations Cup and the grand prix