

Show jumping

GB and Belgium fight for last place

The FEI is still working out its own rulebook to decide which country can remain in the Nations Cup. Charlotte White reports

THE legal team at the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) were scratching their heads over whether Britain will stay in the Nations Cup, show jumping's equivalent of the premier league as *H&H* went to press on Monday.

The British show jumping team is tied in eighth place with Belgium overall in the Meydan FEI Nations Cup series following the final round in Dublin on Friday (7 August). Conflicting rules affecting who will stay in the top league and who is relegated to the second-tier Promotional League have emerged.

Britain pulled off their best result of this year's Nations Cup — a joint-second place with Switzerland on 16 penalties (see report page 26).

But as *H&H* went to press on Monday, confusion still reigned over whether that was enough to ensure they stay in the league.

The FEI announced the "lack of clarity" in their rulebook on Friday and on Monday the situation remained unchanged.

FEI spokesman Malina Gueorguiev said: "The FEI legal department needs to consider what our rules mean before a decision can be made."

Nations Cup rule 10 says in event of a tie for rankings, the team with the greater number of first or second places stays up. This would put Britain, which has a joint second place, into eighth place above Belgium, whose best result is an equal third.

But rule 16 states that ties for relegation should be decided by the team with the greatest number of last places being dumped — which would favour Belgium and send Britain off to the Promotional League.

Rumour suggests the FEI will allow both teams to stay in the league and 11 teams will compete next season, but the FEI would not be drawn.

Team GB gave an outstanding performance at Dublin, they deserve to stay up

Will Connell
British team performance manager



Tim Stockdale and Peter Charles: part of Britain's second-placed team at Dublin

"There will be 11 teams at Rome next year as, although the Italian team has been relegated, they may compete at their home event. Apart from that no decision has been made," said Miss Gueorguiev.

British team performance manager Will Connell says the rules are clear and Britain is staying up, as they are the eighth-placed team under rule 10.

But Ingmar de Vos, secretary-general of the Belgian equestrian federation, is equally adamant that his team should stay put. Both have vowed to fight the FEI's decision, whichever way it falls.

Mr Connell said: "I would rather the FEI takes a few days to consider and makes the right decision than for us to have to hold things up further by making an official representation [against their decision]."

"Team GB gave an absolutely outstanding effort [at Dublin], they came out fighting and showed why they deserve to stay up."

But Mr de Vos said: "We have a lot of sympathy with the British team, but rule 16 deals with relegations and under that rule the British team must leave the league."

"It may not be a good rule, but it was decided by the FEI general assembly."

Whether or not Britain stays in the Nations Cup, Mr Connell said there will be discussions to try to ensure better results next year.

And he issued a rallying cry to show jumping fans to get behind the British team at the Alltech FEI European Jumping and Dressage Championships at Windsor (25-30 August).

"I want the stands full of supporters waving their Union flags. It makes all the difference."

Meydan FEI Nations Cup: who rode for Britain, when and how they fared

La Baule, 15 May – 9th, 17 faults

Peter Charles, Murkas Pom D'Ami; Michael Whitaker, Insul Tech Wonami Van Den Aard; Guy Williams, Toronto Van De Middlestede; John Whitaker, Peppermill

Rome, 29 May – 3rd, 12 faults (standing 7th overall)

Nick Skelton, Nemo; M Whitaker, Insul Tech Wonami Van Den Aard; Ben Maher, Robin Hood W; J Whitaker, Peppermill

St Gallen, 5 June – equal 5th, 12 faults (standing 6th overall)

N Skelton, Nemo; Robert Smith, Vangelis S; P Charles, Murka's Pom D'Ami; B Maher, Robin Hood W

Rotterdam, 19 June – 8th, 25 faults (standing equal 7th overall)

M Whitaker, Insul Tech Wonami Van Den Aard; Geoff Billington, Rosinus; N Skelton, Nemo; R Smith, Vangelis S

Aachen, 2 July – 10th, 14 faults in first round (standing 9th overall)

G Billington, Rosinus; Philip Spivey, Romanov; Gemma Plumley, Lutine Du Charmoie; P Charles, Murka's Pall Mall H

Falsterbo, 17 July – Equal 5th, 21 faults (standing 9th overall)

G Billington, Rosinus; P Spivey, Romanov; G Williams, Toronto Van De Middlestede; P Charles, Murka's Pall Mall H

Hickstead, 24 July – 7th, 59 faults (standing 9th overall)

R Smith, Vangelis S; Tim Gredley, Omelli; B Maher, Robin Hood W; P Charles, Murkas Pom D'Ami

Dublin, 7 August – Joint 2nd, 16 faults (standing equal 8th overall)

B Maher, Robin Hood W; Tim Stockdale, Fresh Direct Corlato; P Charles, Murka's Pall Mall H; G Billington, Rosinus