

100 years on and the Nations Cup is fresher than ever

This year, one of the jewels in the crown of the FEI, the Nations Cup celebrates **100 Years** and the beginning of a new partnership with **Meydan**, the name behind the biggest sporting development in the world, the iconic Meydan Racecourse.

Under this new deal, Jumping's premier team competition will be known as the Meydan FEI Nations Cup™. Meydan Group LLC is the name behind the development of the United Arab Emirate's landmark racecourse, the iconic new green 67 million square feet, state of the art development whose vision is to be 'the lungs of Dubai' and its environmental voice has the horse at its very heart.

President of the FEI, HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein expressed: "‘Meydan’ itself is an Arabic word, which is translated literally in English to mean, ‘the arena’, in Arabic, a meeting place where people come to discuss, compete and achieve. An environment that encourages competition and co-operation to live side by side in harmony. A habitat created to promote excellence and fair play in sport, commerce, life and much more. The match is perfect for everything that we collectively aim to achieve."

As one would imagine, there have been some alterations to the form over these past 100 years, and 2009 is marked with some changes of its own. Among these, ten teams rather than eight, an increase aimed at providing greater opportunities to nations and also to better reflect other premier competitions such as Olympic Games and Continental Championships, will compete at the eight prestigious venues of La Baule, Rome, St. Gallen, Rotterdam, Aachen Falsterbo, Hickstead ending with the world famous Dublin Horse Show in August.

It all started in 1909 when two "young" shows, the indoor London Olympia and the outdoor San Sebastian decided to host, entirely independently of each other, a team competition for officers.

The seed was sown, and from that date onwards, team competitions began to crop up all over. By 1911, the concept had arrived; Rome, Turin, Brussels, London and New York all held team competitions, the success of this new trend was clearly confirmed when the Dutch team returned to one of the biggest victory parades ever seen in the Netherlands following their win in New York.

There were many highlights in the early years, and the success of many national teams gave the sport the recognition and awareness it needed for development in many countries, bearing in mind that by 1912, Jumping was also on the Olympic programme.

The FEI, which had been founded in 1921 really began to take an interest in the team competitions in 1929, and established the first Nations Cup Calendar in 1930, consisting of 14 shows: Berlin, Aachen, Nice, Rome, Brussels, Lisbon, Warsaw, London, Lucerne, Geneva, Dublin, Boston, new York and Toronto.

After World War II, some shows initially struggled to get back on their feet, but soon enough the circuit was active again and increasing in size and scope. Between twelve and sixteen shows made up the Nations Cup calendar until the nineties and were graced with a number of names and formats, such as the Queen's trophy and the President's Cup, the Prince Philip Trophy. And then with the arrival of the series sponsors as of 1987, the Gucci Trophy, the HCS Trophy and the Samsung Nations Cup, allowing new groups of nations from far-flung parts of the world to flex their muscles and raise their game.

When in 2003, the Samsung Super League with FEI series arrived on the international scene, few could have imagined the effect it would have on the sport of show jumping. The Nations Cup had been around for nearly one hundred years, and the new format, with its relegation/promotion system based around having the top teams competing at the top venues entirely revitalised and reenergised the series, gripping the imagination and enthusiasm of riders, organisers and the public alike.

For the ten teams qualified in 2009 - Germany, Ireland, Sweden, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Great Britain, USA, Belgium and Italy - there will be a lot at stake as two nations will face relegation at the end of the series following the final event in Dublin. The suspense will be riding high, as these two teams will be replaced in 2010 by two new emerging teams, the two leading the promotional league following its final event in Barcelona.

Looking back, one notices that it is the very changes, alterations and in effect, ability to innovate that have made the Nations Cup what it is today and testify to its enduring success and appeal.

Meydan arrives at a timely moment in the history of the FEI Nations Cup, with every indication that the series has not only earned but confirmed its place amongst the world's elite sporting tournaments.