

## **The History of the Nations Cup**

The sport of Nations Cup Jumping moves into its second century this year.

Back in 1909 the first team competitions took place at the indoor show at Olympia in London and outdoors at San Sebastian in Spain, when both shows staged an event for military teams.

In 1909 there was no international ruling body for equestrian sport. Horse shows, even with international participation, were held under national rules or, if there was no national federation, were run as the organisers saw fit. As for the competition title, neither Olympia nor San Sebastian, nor any of the other pre-war organisers (until 1914) called them "Nations Cups". The concept of a series or super-league was still a long way off.

### **How it all started...**

The Olympia Show in London, organised for the first time in 1907 and led by a strong President, Lord Lonsdale, was overwhelmed by the level of international participation. The organisers thought it was a good idea to let the officers of the various nations compete against each other in a team competition, so in June 1909, six teams with three riders each competed in one round. It was a tough course. There were no clears and the winning French accumulated 20.5 penalty points. Jean Cariou was in the French team, and three years later became the first Olympic champion. The Italian team was second and included Giorgio Trissino who, nine years earlier, was runner-up in two of the three competitions at the first "Olympic Equestrian Games" in 1900, riding horses for Federico Caprilli. The British, led by the legendary Geoffrey Brooke, were third ahead of Canada, Belgium and Argentina.

In San Sebastian on 17 September 1909, seven teams of five riders competed. Giorgio Bianchetti and Leon of Italy, Oliveira and Ramirez of Argentina and Ripet of Belgium were the only four riders who had already competed at Olympia. The Italian powerhouse of Amalfi, Bianchetti, Antonelli, Bulla and Capece-Zurlo won with 18 points against 32 for the home team and

34 for Argentina. The latter, with only four riders in Europe, missed the injured Olympia starter Casares. The Organisers, with no FEI rulebook in existence, allowed Oliveira to ride three horses. This was the first and last team competition in San Sebastian, although international Jumping continued to take place on an irregular basis in northern Spain. But Olympia repeated the event in 1910 when the Belgians were the winners. Brussels had also staged a team competition a month before Olympia, with the home side finishing out in front.

### **The Early Years...**

By 1911 the team competition concept had arrived. The first took place in Rome on 11 May, where three teams of five competed for the Coppa del Re. Italy, once again led by Amalfi, finished ahead of France. In the French team was the father of Jean d'Orgeix, one of the all-time great riders in the 1940s and 1950s. In Turin, two weeks later, the French team won and in Brussels the Belgians once again took the honours. Seven teams competed in London on 21 June 1911. France was the winner, but in second place was an unknown trio from Russia. The sensation of 1911 was the first team competition at the National Horse Show in Madison Square in Garden in New York on 22 November.

The trophy, The America Cup, was offered by the Martinique Hotel. Four teams competed: The USA, the neighbouring Canadians, the British and some unknowns from the Netherlands. But the latter won and they returned to Amsterdam to one of the biggest victory parades ever seen in the Netherlands.

In 1912 Spa and The Hague held their first team competitions. But the major events were the repeat wins of the Dutch in New York and the sensational victory of Russia at Olympia. Led by Paul Rodzianko, younger brother of Alexander, who brought the Caprilli system to Russia, and the perfect stylist Dimitri d'Exe, the Russians beat the French and the British. The French team included Baron de Merlon with Amazone, probably one of the best horses of the pre-war era. The Russians won again at Olympia in 1913 and 1914 and took the King Edward VII Cup home. The trophy has, unfortunately, disappeared. The Hague in July 1914 was the last team competition before World War I - Olympia, London in June 1920 was the first to take place afterwards and the only one for that year. The Swedish team won and a member of the winning side was 53-year-old Clarence Von Rosen who had been instrumental in bringing equestrian sport into the Olympics in 1912.

In 1921, Nice organised its first horse show. It was held on the fields where Nice airport now stands and was organised to please the riders, but also as an opportunity to open the tourist season. The Nice Horse Show was an immediate success and the visiting teams and their entourages filled the hotels as desired. After World War II the show, one of the top events in the FEI calendar, had to move to the Colline du Château when the Airport was built.

### **The FEI comes into being and the "series" is born...**

In the following years, more shows organised team competitions. The FEI, which was founded in 1921, primarily to take care of the Olympic equestrian events, only began to get involved in team competitions in 1929. It established, for 1930, the first Nations Cup calendar which was, to a certain extent, a series – even though it was not referred to in that way at the time.

The 1930 calendar included 14 shows: Berlin, Aachen, Nice, Rome, Brussels, Lisbon, Warsaw, London, Lucerne, Geneva, Dublin, Boston, New York and Toronto. In these 14 Nations Cups, 17 Nations competed. Using the present day Nations Cup point standings, Italy (34) was in the lead ahead of Germany (27) and Switzerland (24).

The 1930s became the battle of the Army teams, with the French and Italian teams, existing since the turn of the century, competing against newcomers such as Ireland and Germany, created in the late 1920s. These events were a major public attraction between 1931 to 1938/39. Italy and France, who dominated the first 30 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, were slightly weaker, while the Swiss, quite strong until 1930, had also lost power. The duel in the thirties was between Germany and Ireland.

Overall, from 1931 to 1938/1939, Germany had 29 victories against Ireland's 22. But for Ireland, this was a huge success considering the means and breeding programmes at the disposal of the German teams.

### **Post World War II**

Equestrian activities started slowly after World War II. In 1946, only Dublin, New York and Toronto were able to put on a show and renew their Nations Cups. Ireland won in Dublin, but the two North American shows were dominated by Mexico, led by Humberto Moriles. In 1947 there were 10 Nations Cups as life began to return to normal. France won four of them, led by Pierre Jonquères d'Oriola on Marquis III, who later became the only double Olympic Jumping Champion in 1952 and 1964.

In the following years the number of Nations Cup slowly increased. Until the

1990s there were between 12 and 16 annually. Italy who had fielded strong Nations Cup teams for 50 years, had a problem. They had to rely on the d'Inzeo brothers, but with the exception of Mancinelli, rarely found the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> man to field a winning team. Spain, for a few years, played a leading role, as did the already mentioned Mexico.

Germany, after it was readmitted to FEI membership in 1952, remained strong. New among the contenders for victory was Great Britain, now with civilian riders, including excellent lady riders. The most famous British names included Harry Llewellyn, with the great Foxhunter, and the extraordinary lady-rider Pat Smythe. But the strongest impact was made by the United States equestrian team, the civilian organisation which had taken over from the US Army in 1950. Coached by Bert de Nemethy, with the quartet of Steinkraus, Chapot, Wiley and Morris, they not only started to win both on their European tours and at the Fall Circuit Shows, but also impressed with their style. Gladstone, their training centre in New Jersey became a symbol of systematic preparation.

### **The President's Cup 1965 - 1984**

At the FEI General Assembly in December 1964 in Brussels the newly elected President, the Duke of Edinburgh, suggested the creation of a Jumping championship based on the results of the Nations Cup. He offered a trophy, portraying his wife, Queen Elizabeth II on horse-back. The first such Nation Cup Series, called the President's Cup, was run in 1965, and was won by Great Britain. Of the 16 Nations Cups held in 1965, the British won six (Madrid, Olsztyn, Dublin, Copenhagen, Oostende and Rotterdam) and won the Presidents Cup with 34 points ahead of Italy (30) and Germany (28)

The following year the United States won, and then again in 1968. The latter triumph was achieved with six wins from six starts (London, Dublin, Ostende, Rotterdam, New York and Toronto). Steinkraus and Chapot were still mainstays in the USET Squad, with Mary Mairs (later Chapot) and Kathy Kusner joining the team.

In the years 1969 to 1979 the President's Cup was won by Great Britain (7 times) and the Federal Republic of Germany (4 times). Then in 1980 France won. They competed in 11 of the 16 Nations Cups held in this Olympic boycott year, and won five of them: Rome, Aachen, Liege, Paris and Toronto. Frederic Cottier on Flambeau was a member of all five winning teams.

### **The Prince Phillip Trophy and the Gucci Trophy 1985 - 1989**

In 1985 the Queen's trophy and the title President's Cup was transferred to a

newly created annual points championship, honouring the National Federations for their riders' performances in the championships. Thus, for 1985 and 1986 the Nations Cup Series was called the Prince Phillip Trophy. Then for a three-year period from 1987, the Nations Cup series had its first sponsor, Gucci. The series was now called the Gucci Trophy and 17 Nations Cup competitions took place in 1987 with 24 countries taking part and 19 countries receiving points (on the scale 6-4-3-2-1 for the top five placings). France won the series for the second time since 1980 and thus became the first Gucci trophy winner. France won five of the 17 Nations Cup, including the one in La Baule with the all star cast of Cottier / Flambeau, Rozier / Jiva, Robert / Lafayette and Durand / Jappeloup.

The French followed this up with another win in 1988. This time they won seven of the 19 Nations Cups held, including for the second time only the most coveted trophy of them all at Aachen, again with Flambeau, Lafayette and Jappeloup, while Bourdy / Morgat replaced Jiva. For the third Gucci trophy, in 1989, Great Britain stepped up to the challenge to claim victory.

### **HCS Nations Cup 1990-1991**

In 1990 HCS, a Dutch technology company, replaced Gucci as Nations Cup Series sponsor. But, faced with an economic crisis, they dropped out after little more than a year. Still the HCS Nations Cup season did introduce an interesting new feature - a final, held in September 1991 on Leon Melchior's property at Lanaken in Belgium. The United States won this unique world final with Leslie Lenehan, Debbie Shaffer, Joan Scharffenberger and Greg Best riding the grey Gem Twist.

This 1990 /91 season started in October 1990 in Washington and ended in September at Luciano Pavarotti's property in Modena, one week before the final in London. The regular series before the final consisted of 19 Nations Cups of which Great Britain won six. At the final, the prominent foursome of John and Michael Whitaker, David Broome and Nick Skelton could only place third behind Germany. The winners from the USA earned their victory in a final jump-off against Germany - under the rules of the time all four riders jumped off against the clock.

### **The Nations Trophy 1992-1996**

With the permanent departure of HCS the Nations Cup Series became a points system again, without a final. From 1992 to 1996 it was called the Nations Trophy and was won by France and Germany on two occasions and

once by Great Britain.

### **Samsung enters the arena...**

In the fall of 1995, the Korean industrial conglomerate Samsung expressed a desire for a global sponsorship, having been the faithful sponsor of the two development series in Jumping and Dressage for nine years. With Volvo in its 18<sup>th</sup> year as World Cup sponsor, and with no intention of moving, the FEI proposed the sponsorship of the Nations Cup Series. After a number of high-powered meetings, an FEI delegation went to Seoul for a signing ceremony and the first Nations Cup for the Samsung Series was held on 11 May 1997 in La Baule.

### **Samsung Nations Cup (1997 – 2003)**

Since the Samsung Nations Cup Series was to end with a final in September of each year, the first Samsung season was shortened. It consisted of 17 regular Nations Cups, followed by the final on 12 September 1997 at Spruce Meadows in Calgary. The United States won the series, with wins in Rome, St. Gallen, Falsterbo and Rotterdam. In Calgary they placed second behind the Netherlands, but despite the double-points given at the final, the Dutch could not overtake the Americans who won with 39.5 points against 34 for the Netherlands. The winning Dutch team on the day was Emile Hendrix / Finesse, Bert Romp / Samantha, Jos Lansink / Calvaro Z and Jan Tops / Operette. The second-placed American team was Alison Firestone, Nona Garson, McLain Ward and Anne Forlinski. Other riders who contributed to the US series win were Leslie Howard, Laura Clapton, Peter Leone, Beezie Patton, Richard Spooner, Francis Steinwedell, Katie Prudent and Margie Goldstein. For the first time also a prize for the leading rider of the series was awarded based on the number of clears. It was won by Alison Firestone with two double clears (three points each) and three single clears (one point each) for a total of 9 pts. Alison's horse Gustl P won the trophy for the leading horse in 1997, also with 9 points.

The second season of the Samsung Nations Cup Series (1997/1998) consisted of 30 regular Nations Cup and the final in Donaueschingen on 20 September 1998. The same points scale as in the previous season applied, with double points given at the final. After 30 regular Nations Cups there was a three way tie for the lead with 34 points. each between France, the Netherlands and Germany. Italy with 32, was also still in the running for ultimate victory.

In the first round in Donaueschingen, four teams had only 4 penalty points, including title contenders the Dutch and French.. Germany with 8 still had a

chance, but Italy with 16 was out. Eight teams competed and six made it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> round. France and the Netherlands managed a clear score this time to go into a jump-off. Germany, too, went clear, but the eight points from round one kept them out of the timed decider.

The Dutch were first to go: Van der Meulen went clear, then Alexandra Lederman for France. Tops went clear, then Bourdy had eight. The Dutch were elated. Of the third riders Feerink had a refusal for the Netherlands while Navet went clear for the French. It was down to the anchor riders to decide. Jos Lansink, who would, with a clear round, have clinched the trophy for the Dutch, retired after a knock-down because he would have been the drop score. Last was Thierry Pomel and Thor des Chaines runner-up at the World Championships just some weeks before. A clear would bring victory to France, a knock-down would give the trophy to the Netherlands. He succeeded, with a slow clear round, well within the generous time and France was the winner.

Despite this ideal and exciting finish of the series, the rules were changed for the 1998/1999 season. Twenty-seven Nations Cups were on the programme, followed by the final in Gijon, Spain, now counting from scratch. The Netherlands won the regular season, but in Gijon, France won the Final, when the last German, Ludger Beerbam lowered the final fence.

In the next three seasons, three more Samsung Nations Cup Series were held according to this formula. Ireland and twice Germany won the regular series, Germany, the Netherlands and, a big surprise - Italy - took the finals  
**Samsung Super League with FEI (2003-2008)**

A new and exciting format was introduced in 2003 - the Samsung Super League with FEI. It consisted of eight events and the top eight teams, plus the home team if it was not among the eight. There were between 18 to 20 normal Nations Cups with its own point standings. A relegation/promotion system was established between the Nations Cups and the Samsung Super League with FEI so that, at the end of the season, the top placed team from the Nations Cup moved up to the Samsung Super League with FEI while the last placed team in the Samsung Super League with FEI was relegated to the Nations Cup league.

The annual final in Barcelona was part of the regular Samsung Super League with FEI series, but double points were given at the final. The six winners of the Super League 2003-2008 were: France twice \*2003 and 2004(, the USA (2005) and Germany three times (2006, 2007 and 2008).

**The next 100 years...**

In 2009 the sport of Nations Cup Jumping celebrated its centenary with the establishment of a new partnership with Meydan, the name behind the biggest sporting development in the world, the iconic Meydan Racecourse in Dubai.

With some new exciting changes to the format, the Meydan FEI Nations Cup now features the world's 10 best teams competing against each other at eight prestigious venues: La Baule in France, Rome in Italy, St-Gallen in Switzerland, Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Falsterbo in Sweden, Aachen in Germany, Hickstead in Great Britain and Dublin in Ireland.

For the countries qualified to compete in 2010 however there is an extra edge, because four will be relegated to the Promotional League at the end of the season in order to re-create an eight-nation super-tournament in 2011. The line-up for the 2010 Meydan FEI Nations Cup series is France, Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and the USA.

With 100 years of tradition, innovation and great competition already behind it, the sport of Nations Cup Jumping continues to capture the hearts and minds of riders and spectators world-wide. As it marches into its second century, a new chapter of international equestrian sporting history begins.....