

POWERFUL ELEGANCE

FROM 26 TO 29 OF MAY - ROME

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CSIO Rome - where history and heroes are made

Excitement is at boiling point ahead of this week's **CSIO Rome - Master Fratelli d'Inzeo 2022** at the Piazza di Siena in the Villa Borghese gardens which lie at the heart of the Roman capital city. Dating all the way back to 1926 it is an event that takes centre stage in the annual showjumping calendar and is like no other equestrian tournament in the world.

The competitors love it, the public enjoy every single moment of it and the joy of operating without restrictions this year adds an extra element of expectation. At the height of the pandemic the show had to be abandoned in 2020, and although it returned in 2021 under strict Covid protocols it is fully open again this time around with big crowds expected over the four-day fixture that begins on Thursday 26 May.



Belgium, Intesa Sanpaolo Nations Cup 2021 winner - ph. CSIO Rome/S.Ferraro

Friday's Intesa Sanpaolo Nations Cup and Sunday's Rome Rolex Grand Prix are the two biggest competitions of the week, but every class will be hotly contested.

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Thrilling battle

In 2021 **Belgium** claimed the prestigious Nations Cup title for only the second time in a thrilling battle with Germany that came down to a third-round jump-off against the clock. It was Gregory Wathelet who sealed that Belgian victory and he returns again this year with team-mates Pieter Clemens, Zoe Conter, Jerome Guery and Nicola Phlipaerts to defend that title.

Two years earlier Team Ireland finished second to the winning side from Sweden, and this time around the Irish are coming out with all guns blazing. Despite their tremendous record in Nations Cup jumping down the year they have never managed to clinch the coveted trophy in Rome. They have it clearly in their sights this time around.



Cian O'Connor – ph. CSIO Rome/M.Proli

Irish team member, **Cian O'Connor**, said today *"CSIO Rome is a huge show, one of the biggest of the year. If some of the other big shows are called 5-Stars then this must be 7-Stars because it's a fantastic event and we all look forward to going there! I have jumped the Nations Cup there many times and was on the team in 2019 when I was also second in the Grand Prix behind Israel's Daniel Bluman. One of my earliest memories of Rome was being double-clear in 2004 with Waterford Crystal when Kevin Babington and Dermott Lennon were on the team and so to go back there with as strong a side as we have this time is very exciting!"*

Chef d'Equipe Michael Blake also has Bertram Allen, Alexander Butler, Darragh Kenny and Denis Lynch in his squad.

Rome Rolex Grand Prix

Winning the Grand Prix of Rome is one of the greatest distinctions in the sport of showjumping and only four Irish riders have ever succeeded. Lynch was the last of those when partnering Lantinus in 2008 and he was following in legendary footsteps as the previous Irish winners were armymen John Lewis with Limerick Lace in 1938 and Billy Ringrose with Loch an Easpaig in 1961 before Eddie Macken and Boomerang held the trophy aloft in 1978.

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PIAZZA di SIENA

O'Connor arrives in Rome this time with a new horse in his string, the 14-year-old **C Vier 2** who won the Grand Prix title for Germany's David Will a year ago. So this new pairing will be closely watched when they canter into the world-famous grass oval at Piazza di Siena this week.

"C Vier is very new to me, I only have him 28 days when this show comes around but he has all the experience he needs. He was originally ridden by a German girl, Janine Rijkens, and in more recent times by David so he has travelled the world, he's very experienced and of course he won the Grand Prix in Rome last year. That will be difficult to live up to with only a month's experience on him, but I'm certainly very much looking forward to being part of the Nations Cup team there with him and hopefully we can help the team do well", O'Connor said today.

Rolex testimonees

Fellow countryman, **Bertram Allen**, is one of three Rolex testimonees competing at CSIO Rome this year and the other two - Switzerland's **Martin Fuchs** and **Steve Guerdat** - will also be ones to watch out for all week. World number two Fuchs has been on fire over the last year and more, and he brings the spectacular Leone Jei with which he won team gold and individual silver at the 2021 FEI European Championships.

London 2012 Olympic champion and three-time World Cup winner Guerdat can never be discounted and former rider and Rolex honoree **Eric Lamaze**, who with the magnificent Hickstead won the Rome Grand Prix title in 2011, will be back pacing the pavements of Piazza di Siena this week in his role as Canadian team manager.

Italy's record on home ground has long been impressive but the host-nation riders will face the stiffest of opposition from those representing **15 other countries**. The battle for some of the most coveted titles in equestrian sport begins in just a few days time....don't miss a moment as all roads lead to Rome this week!

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