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PIAZZA di SIENA
89th CSIO ROMA 2022

POWERFUL ELEGANCE

MAY 26-29 - ROME



INTESA SANPAOLO



Press Release no. 4 - May 26th 2022

EXCITEMENT AT BOILING POINT AHEAD OF INTESA SANPAOLO NATIONS CUP

Team Netherlands will be first to go when the Intesa Sanpaolo Nations Cup gets underway at 14.30 local time tomorrow afternoon at CSIO Rome - Masters Fratelli d'Inzeo 2022. A total of 10 countries will be represented in the annual spectacle that draws huge crowds to the green oval in beautiful Piazza di Siena in the heart of Rome, and the side all the rest may have to beat is from Belgium, winners in 2021 and right on top of their game following victory at La Baule in France just a few short weeks ago.



Lorenzo De Luca riding F One Usa - ph. FISE/M.Argenziano

German riders will be second to go ahead of Great Britain, then Ireland, then the hosts from Italy and then Spain. The final four teams lining out this year are USA, Canada, France and the defending Belgians.

WWW.PIAZZADISIENA.IT

Press Office: EQUI-EQUIPE

+39.331.4603432 / +39.06.45495394 / press@piazzaDISIENA.it



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Tremendous record

Italy has a tremendous record of success on home ground despite a long period in the doldrums between 1985 and 2017 when they at last found winning form once again. And they followed with another victory in 2018 to bring their tally to a massive total of 29 top placings since they first won this historic team event in its inaugural year, way back in 1926. Italian Chef d'Equipe Marco Porro this evening announced his side for tomorrow's thrilling clash.

"Luca Marziani will break the ice, he is a rider with great experience in this kind of competition and he will give safety to the team, also thanks to his great coolness in the field", Porro said.

"Subsequently the starting order of our 'Azzuri' will see Antonio Garofalo and Filippo Bologni each making their Nations Cup debut here in Rome this year. To close our quartet will be Lorenzo de Luca who needs no introduction. Thanks to his experience he will be able to take the responsibility of going last", the Italian team manager concluded.

Second

Lying second in the Rome Nations Cup Roll of Honour is Team France with 19 victories followed by Great Britain with 12 and Germany with 11. The USA has won five times, Switzerland three and Belgium, Sweden and The Netherlands twice. Eyeing up their first win despite multiple attempts down the years are Team Ireland who have sent a super-sharp side that includes tonight's ENI Prize winner Darragh Kenny along with Cian O'Connor, Denis Lynch and Bertram Allen.

KENNY PUTS IRELAND TOP OF THE PODIUM IN THE ENI SPEED

Team Ireland got a big boost when Darragh Kenny claimed the honours in the biggest class of the first day, the 1.55m Table A presented by ENI at CSIO5* Rome - Masters Fratelli d'Inzeo 2022 at Piazza di Siena this afternoon.

Riding the 13-year-old French-bred stallion Volnay du Boisdeville he galloped through Uliano Vezzani's course with consummate ease to oust the host nation's Giulia Martinengo Marquet from pole position and held on firmly for the win.

The always fast Frenchman Simon Delestre and the nine-year-old gelding Dexter Fontenis looked set to threaten when second-last into the ring and, despite an unintentionally wide turn to the double at fence three, still raced in to finish third while The Netherlands' Jur Vrieling slotted into fourth with Fiumicino van de Kalevallei. Best Italian was Emanuele Gaudiano who steered the always extravagant Chalou into fifth place.

Chasing

Kenny was chasing Martinengo Marquet's time of 61.89 seconds when 48th to go in the field of 64 starters. "I wasn't expecting to win but I think my horse is naturally very fast, I had a good plan with what I wanted to do and it came off pretty much exactly the way I wanted it to....he's an incredible horse and he jumped fantastic today so I was really happy with the way it worked out!", the Irishman said after shaving almost a full second off the target time when breaking the beam in 60.96.

The 13-year-old stallion was previously competed by his student Teddy Vlock who competes for Israel. "Teddy rode him for three or four years and had great success with him jumping Nations Cups and 5-Star Grand Prix classes and I took over the ride at the end of last year and he's been fantastic with me also. He won a 4-Star Grand Prix in Wellington, he was placed in the 5-Star Grand Prix in Miami and now he has won the 1.55m class here", Kenny pointed out.

Fondness

He has great fondness for the venue at Piazza di Siena. "The first time I ever jumped on an Irish team was here when I was 20 or 21 years old, it was my very first Nations Cup so I've been here a few times and it has always treated me very well!", said the 34-year-old who currently lies 16th in the world rankings and who, along with America's Hardin Towell, carves out his showjumping career under the banner of Oakland Ventures with bases both in the US and Europe.

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+39.331.4603432 / +39.06.45495394 / press@piazadisienna.it



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"Piazza di Siena is an incredible venue for a horse show and one of the nicest shows of the year. We've struggled as an Irish team to win here but I think we have a strong side this year so if everything goes our way I think we have a very good shot!", he said, looking ahead to tomorrow's Intesa SanPaola Nations Cup.



Darragh Kenny - ph. Sport e Salute / S. Ferraro

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