

SPORT
E SALUTE



PIAZZA di SIENA
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INTESA  SANPAOLO



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DAY ONE IS A THRILLER AT PIAZZA DI SIENA 2023

A super-fast round from young British star Jodie Hall McAteer and Kimosa van het Kritahof in the 1.50m ENI Speed class brought the first day the 90th edition of CSIO Rome - Piazza di Siena 2023 to a thrilling close this evening.

The 23-year-old was the third first-timer to taste victory in Rome today, following Brazil's Pedro Veniss who won the Jump-Off competition staged at the Gallopotio in the morning riding Cadum de Champloue, and world number two Julien Epaillard from France who partnered Dubai de Soie to pin Hall McAteer and Catoki into runner-up spot in the MAG Two-Phase. It was quite a day for Hall McAteer, but this cool character took it all in her stride. "*It can't get better!*", she said this evening before climbing onboard for her second prizegiving ceremony.

GAME OF TWO HALVES

This competition was literally a game of two halves however, with biblical rain changing the grass footing which held up superbly but was very different to the dry going experienced by the first tranche of riders.

A storm arrived just as a 10-minute arena maintenance break began after the first 34 of the 68 competing horse and rider combinations had taken their turn. By then Hall-McAteer had set the target at a fast 64.52 seconds and, at the end of the day, that just could not be beaten while Belgium's Nicola Philippaerts and Dhalida Diamant vd Krekebeke Z who were fifth-last to go before the break held on to second place with their time of 66.14.

Thunder and lightning rolled in, but the early riders in the second half still took their turn before rain completely stopped play. However even when the sky cleared and a more peaceful climate returned it just wasn't possible to match the pace set in the first half, although Hall McAteer's compatriot Ben Maher gave it his best shot.

The reigning Olympic champion has only just returned to top sport following a nasty fall three months ago but he has clearly lost none of his focus, setting out at a determined rate with the 14-year-old gelding Exit Remo and only hampered in his bid to oust the two ahead of him by a slip on the turn to the Loro Piana vertical at fence six. Crossing the line in 66.36 he finished third ahead of Austria's Gerfried Puck and Equitron Melody vd Smidshoeve (67.25) in fourth, last man into the ring Omar Karaevli from Turkey riding Maurice in fifth (67.43) and Switzerland's Bryan Balsiger and Chelsea Z in sixth (68.45).



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GREAT START

"This has been a great start to the show for me and I'm delighted!", Hall McAteer said. "I've had this mare three years and she's a super horse, she's really brave and competitive and she knows her job now and she's been amazing for me. She has jumped 1.60m before but she's not a Peppa! (comparing her to her top ride Salt'n Peppa). For these classes and to be a second horse for him she is super", she pointed out.



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In 2020 she was selected for the prestigious Young Riders Academy, and as part of the programme received a six-month training scholarship with the Schroeder brothers Ben, Wim and Gerco in Tubbergen in The Netherlands. She was given the opportunity to stay a little longer, then went back home to England but has returned to train with Ben and is operating out of Holland now.

"I've been back there since January and Ben has been a massive help to me", she said. Her coach will be a happy man tonight.



DELIGHTED

Meanwhile three-time Olympian Veniss was also delighted with his opening-class win, and to be successful on his very first visit to CSIO Rome. *"I have competed more or less all over the world, but there is no particular reason why I have not been here before. So I was delighted with the invitation to be in Rome on this occasion and to represent Brazil in the Nations Cup"*, the 40-year-old rider said



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And Frenchman Julien Epailard, who has been in flying form for quite some time now, was also feeling quite pleased with himself on making such a strong debut at Piazza di Siena.

"I had already won five competitions in Rome, but only at the Global Champions Tour, first at the Foro Italico and then at the Circus Maximus. Dubai de Soie produced a good performance today which is also important considering tomorrow's Nations Cup", he said.

The French will be defending the title they won in last year's Intesa Sanpaolo Nations Cup and, drawn second-last to go of the 10 competing countries, they are likely to be tough nuts to crack. They have lifted the Rome Nations Cup title on 19 occasions since it was first contended back in 1926 and they know what it takes.

The order-of-go for tomorrow's competition which begins at 14.30 local time is: 1, Switzerland; 2, Germany; 3, Italy; 4, Sweden; 5, Ireland; 6, Brazil; 7, Great Britain; 8, Belgium; 9, France; 10, Netherlands.



QUOTES AND FACTS FROM SOME RIDERS AND CHEFS D'EQUIPE....

Henrik Ankarcrona: it cannot be real! - Like everyone arriving at Piazza di Siena today, Swedish Chef d'Equipe Henrik Ankarcrona was enjoying the lovely weather and this very special location this morning. *"Piazza di Siena is such a beautiful venue and it looks even more fantastic this year. It is so beautiful that if you painted a picture of it people would say 'that can not be real' - but it is, and we love it here!"*.

Laura loves Roma - *"I love Rome. This is my 23rd year here, the first time I came was in 2000! And Nick (her partner and British Olympic champion Nick Skelton) has come here for 45 years! I was asked how much it has changed and I said a little but it's actually much the same and it's just so beautiful!"*.

Laura Kraut has high hopes for Bisquetta - *"Bisquetta is a nine-year-old mare, I got her when she was 7 and she's a really exciting horse for the future for me. I jumped her in her first 5-Star about three weeks ago and she was clear, she's everything you want in a horse. She's brave, she's smart, she's quick, careful. I jumped the 5-Star Grand Prix with her in San Miguel, Mexico. She has only jumped one 1.60m course, and her plan for this week is the Saturday Grand Prix, I've got Baloutine here for the Sunday Rolex Grand Prix. At the end of the summer or the start of fall I think Bisquetta can then start to step up"*.

British Chef d'Equipe Di Lampard: great to have Ben back! - *"This is always a tough Nations Cup. To come here to Rome at the beginning of the year is not for the faint-hearted that's for sure. It's the most beautiful show in the world and we are never short of riders that want to come! We've been very lucky here over the years and have enjoyed a lot of success here including two wins in the last seven years (2015 and 2016) and it would be nice to make it three tomorrow!"*.

"It's great to have Ben back at this stage of the season, especially after his horrific accident!", said British Chef d'Equipe Di Lampard today. Reigning Olympic champion Ben Maher was injured in a fall in Florida, USA in February but has been back in the saddle in recent weeks and firing on all cylinders once again.

"We have other partnerships here - John Whitaker whose horse is fresh and hasn't done so much jumping this year but John always goes well in Rome so we have him in that corner. We have new partnerships in the team - Matt Sampson who has been producing this horse (Ebolensky) for a long while - everybody is having an opportunity to build up for the European Championships. Jodie Hall-McAteer is becoming a regular member of the team now, absolutely going well all the time and getting valuable experience. Tim Gredley is again a rider that we will be trialling, going on to St Gallen with us next week. He has two very good horses, the young horse Imperious who we are looking forward to seeing this year and Medoc who is an experienced campaigner".

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