

## British Riders compete in Sardinia at the European Working Equitation Championships

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Despite the credit crunch, and the UK economy in a dire state and all of the bad depressing news on the television, I would like to put some good news in the paper as editorial.

As a local business struggling in these hard financial times with fuel prices on the up and being a women in business, I am well aware how hard it is to stay afloat and how important every job is, therefore I would like to shed some light on a fantastic job that we have just completed and spread the news.

As a local international Horse transport company based in Dorking Surrey, Elizabeth O'Connor Director of LOC LTD international horse transport was contacted and invited to send out estimations/quotations to transport team GB to Sardinia. It was to take 7 horses from the Working GB Equitation team from the UK down to Sardinia, stay with them while they competed and transport them home. I was absolutely delighted to have won such a huge prestigious job at this time of the year when competitions are slowing down. Denise Neill our full time longest employed professional driver from Capel, Dorking Surrey (qualified with the Advanced Certificate in Equine Transport) drove the horses and provided them with the utmost care and attention that they needed to have performed as athletes in Sardinia. Our lorry is specially equipped and designed to transport valuable equines comprising of CCTV, temperature control recording devices, air suspension, fan assisted ventilation, and satellite navigation.

Seven British riders competed recently at the European Working Equitation Championships which were held on 10-12 October at the Horse Country Resort in Arborea, Sardinia.

Teams from Italy, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and Great Britain were represented in the senior competition and two individual Austrian riders also took part. Belgium, Italy and Great Britain also each fielded 3 junior riders, to compete in the junior section.

The British team is, led by chef d'equipe Sherene Rahmatallah from Alfold Surrey. All riders have been competing this year in a series of competitions across the UK, organised by the UK ruling body Working Equitation UK, in preparation for Sardinia.

The Working Equitation competition consists of a dressage test, a style test (with obstacles), a speed test (with obstacles) and a cattle cutting test. At the International level, the senior riders must ride with the reins only in their left hand but the juniors can ride with both hands. This discipline is based on working on farms and in the fields. Flying changes are required

from the horses in the first two phases (flatwork and style with obstacles). Each country has adapted the rider's outfit and horse's tack which should be based on their typical "working dress". The Austrians and Germans participated for the first time in this competition and were impeccably dressed in their traditional outfits. The breeds of horses used in this competition varied and included Maremmas (an Italian breed of small horse), Lusitanos, an Oldenburg, an Appaloosa, Lipizzaners, Barbs and Anglo Arabs. Apart from the training needed, the horses also need to be agile and bold – horses that you could use in the field for opening gates, crossing over bridges and herding cattle. This competition brings this outdoor country atmosphere into the confines of an arena which makes it a very popular spectator as well as rider sport. The cattle test is the final team phase. Most riders managed to cut their cow out of a herd of 20 cows within the time limit of 3 minutes.

After sitting in 4<sup>th</sup> position after the flatwork and style tests, a couple of eliminations in the speed round meant that Great Britain dropped their senior team placing to 5<sup>th</sup> but performed superbly. "I was very proud of our team in Sardinia. I have seen all of the riders and horses develop throughout the year at the competitions and to watch them compete in Sardinia was fantastic - we were unlucky this year as one of our team horses was unable to compete but everyone pulled together and we still put forward a very strong image", said British Working Equitation judge, Paula Keeley.

The hospitality at Horse Country Resort was excellent – both the equestrian facilities for the horses and the riders' facilities were first class. A Sardinian Holy Mass for the horses similar to that of a Horse Man's Sunday, took place on the morning of the final day, followed by the prize giving. The prizes were presented by Cesare Croce, President of the Italian Equestrian Federation (FISE) and also Chairman of Regional Group 1 of the FEI. In the senior section, Great Britain took 5<sup>th</sup> place with Portugal in 1<sup>st</sup> place, Italy 2<sup>nd</sup> and Germany 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the junior section, Holly and Natasha took individual Silver medals in the dressage and style (with obstacles) sections giving the junior team an overall Silver medal.