

Finn Valley in France

BRC was invited to send a team to France for the The Generali World Club Tournament and sent reigning Intermediate Showjumping National Champions, Finn Valley RC to represent GB. Julia Sheppard reports on their fortunes in the friendly tournament



TOUR DE FRANCE!

The Generali World Club Tournament is a friendly competition for riding clubs from all over the world. Held in July last year at Lamotte Beuvron, and run by the French Federation, BRC was invited to send a team to represent GB in the International Team Showjumping event. Reigning Intermediate Showjumping National Champions, Finn Valley RC stepped up to the plate. Despite the distance it was an opportunity the team were thrilled to accept. The team comprised Julia Sheppard and Hot Prospect, Rosie Stevens and Van Neolux, Shirley Stagg and Possibilities and Lisa Kenyon and Cyndaquil and they were supported by Lucy and Isabella Stagg, and chef d'Equipe Barbara Smith. Here Julia reports on the exciting action from that weekend.

Main picture, above: The team enjoys the event's Grand Parade of competing nations, leading the way with Union Jacks in hand

It was a 3.30am start to load the lorry and set the horses on their way across the channel. Arriving at Dover in good time for our ferry, the horses followed closely behind on the next crossing.

The journey south continued through Paris and we finally arrived at Lamotte-Beuvron and Parc Equestrian at about 5pm. Nobody seemed to speak very much English but we met up with Madame Maridie Bourgade who showed us our stables and around the complex.

The horses arrived after a 14 hour journey and all came off the lorry looking really well. After having settled them with well-deserved food and water we decided it was time to find our Motel, clean-up, and find food for ourselves.

After an early morning ride around the Parc we all met at 12pm at the main FFE hospitality area for the drawn order. GB were drawn to ride first. Following the welcome drinks we were invited to be filmed for the French Equestrian TV channel.

Grinning with our Union Jacks we introduced ourselves in pidgin French



and said how pleased we were to be participating. It was then time to plait and get ready for the parade of the competing nations. We were first and led the other teams around the arena carrying the Union Jack.

Once everyone was lined up in their teams, each team was invited forward, introduced individually to the crowd, before their national anthem was played; what an experience!

As we had been drawn first we were quickly back through the tunnel and into the main arena for the warm-up round. Rosie set the standard with a flawless clear round, instilling us all with confidence.

Three further clears set the president for the other teams to follow. Once the warm-up class was completed we made our way back to Centre Parcs for the cocktail part at 7.30pm. A lively affair, we all ate fabulous canapés and pastries before setting off home for the night.

The following day started with an early ride out on the horses. The course walk was followed promptly by the first riders of each nation. The course was twisty, long and testing which required forward riding, first

up was Rosie who jumped a great round with just an unlucky four faults.

Next up was Lisa who rode a great positive clear round. Julia was the third to go and despite jumping a good round rolled two poles for eight faults.

Last up was Shirley who jumped a well-deserved bold clear round. At the end of round one we ended up in joint third place, with France, behind Ivory Coast and Senegal.

The last day of competition saw the teams jump in reverse order of merit, Rosie was fifth to go and again rode a lovely forward round and just tipped the pole on the 12th jump. Lisa went next with Cyndaquil behaving impeccably



Rosie Stevens, left, and Julia Sheppard (below left) in action and the team flying the flag for GB



for a second clear round, I think she was enjoying the celebratory music that blares out when a clear round is achieved.

Julia went next and did a lovely round just tipping the third part of the treble which was a great shame. Shirley unfortunately had two down. We then waited nervously to see if we qualified for the third round jump off, we came fifth and so were first to go in the jump off.

Rosie again had an unlucky four faults over the big parallel off a difficult corner; Lisa had the fifth fence down, Julia rolled the third fence and Shirley went clear.

There was some amazing jumping from the other teams, and some very fast times. The final results ended with The Ivory Coast first, France second, Senegal and Suriname joint third and we were placed a creditable fifth.

The main prize giving was done in a separate arena with much hype and

music! We would have loved to be on the podium but it was marvellous to be at the presentation and to be congratulated at such a multinational event. Everyone was extremely friendly and helpful and watching how other nations ride and look after their horses has been quite an education.

Thanks to all the supporters at home. Over the weekend it was great to see so many people checking our progress on Facebook! We

had a wonderful experience and are so happy that our lovely horses coped so well, after such a long journey, with the heat and the incredible atmosphere! ●

Shirley Stagg (inset) and Lisa Kenyon in action (above)

The 'cheering' section! Team supporters and helpers

