

British jump to bronze

Hard work pays off for the British team at the Rural Riders

European Championship.

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reports



Above: the bronze medal British team (back row, l-r): Emma Armstrong, Kate Scott, Sarah England, Jim Arkley and Nicole Saunders. Front row: Sir Robert Hayman-Joyce (chef de mission), Hilary McKenna (team manager), Capt Richard Waygood (chef d'equipe) and Martin Thompson. Left: Tina Richter-Vietor on Ami Petit, team and individual gold medal winner for Germany



THE six members of the British Riding Clubs national team jumped their way to a bronze medal at the Rural Riders European Championships at Hartpury College — the first to be held in Britain. Germany won the seven-team competition, which was run as a three-day event (minus the steeplechase), with two of her riders, Tina Richter-Vietor and Insa Kristina Weddige, taking individual first and second places.

British rider Sarah Deary, of Sunnyside Riding Club in Sunderland, claimed Britain's highest ever individual placing, gaining fourth place and the inaugural Sue Picken Trophy. The event was held in memory of Sue, a former international teams organiser.

As well as riding individual dressage tests, the first day is given over to team dressage, with all six combinations in the arena together. Belgium took the lead on a mark of 82, while the British squad suffered much misfortune, picking up 144 penalties to finish just one mark ahead of the seventh-placed Austrian team. Sarah Deary's ride, Shiver St George, did not settle. His unusual behaviour was attributed to the noise of the arena surface hitting the boards, while Kate Scott's team leader Times Square's chances of winning the Lottery must have been higher than that of being stung by a hornet. The 17.2hh grey reared and fought off his rare attacker, but in doing so got stung on the eye — the offending sting was later removed and, after treatment, he suffered no further problems.

After the individual dressage, Shiver St George, a nine-year-old by Shaab, redeemed himself to be

the best of the British in 14th place.

Sue Stewart, the British member of the ground jury, said of the team dressage: "When they come down the centre line, I want to see just one horse. The horses have to be able to work together and riders have to appreciate pace — you need a strong lead horse working forward otherwise everybody else will have to hold back. And there is a mark for turnout — so much the better if you all have matching tack. The Belgians were fantastically well produced."

Mike Etherington-Smith's cross-country course, described by team trainer and chef d'equipe Capt Richard Waygood as "on a par with Windsor, only more technical", indicated that this would not be a dressage competition.

The British riders came into their own here, all jumping clear, with two, Times Square and Lord Bertram (Emma Armstrong), coming home within the time. Team opener Sarah England and her home-bred Dallas mare, Dallamore, had an unfortunate fall on the flat, but after a quick remount accrued just 14 time-penalties.

At the end of the day, of the 42 starters, 40 completed, with 29 going clear, with only four inside the time. Germany took the team lead, with Tina Richter-Vietor and Ami Petit marginally ahead of compatriot and dressage leader Insa Kristina Weddige on Aram in the individual.

The British team, by virtue of its strong