



European Championship test for the Swiss riders at the CSIO St. Gallen

Switzerland with its strongest team

With the strongest possible team Switzerland is attending the CSIO St. Gallen from June 2nd to 5th in the "Gründenmoos". Pius Schwizer, Steve Guerdat, Werner Muff and Janika Sprunger hope, that they will be able to stand up against the best eight teams of the world in the FEI Nations-Cup with their top-horses.

The Nations-Cup in two rounds on June 3rd with a prize winning amount of € 200'000 is the only chance for the Swiss show jumping riders this year, to compete with the strongest nations before the European Championship in September in Madrid. The only reason, that they can join the tournament is the fact, that St. Gallen is organizer of the Top League event. Last year the European Champions of 2009 fell out of the top league together with Sweden, Spain and Poland. Now they have to try to get back to the top through the Promotional League and prepare for a possible qualification for the Olympic Games. "Our goal for this season is the European Championship in Madrid, where we hope to get one of the three tickets, that the Europeans have for London 2012" are Chef d'Equipe Urs Grünig's words for the target of the next months.

The successor of Rolf Grass hopes for a top-ranking in St. Gallen. World-Champion Germany, Olympic Gold Medal Winner USA, winner of last years Nations-Price France, Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands and the two new teams Belgium and Denmark will show the Swiss, if they can make themselves hopes for a qualification for the Olympic Games 2012 in England.

Janika Sprunger in the team

Urs Grünig has certainly nominated his at the moment best team. This includes Pius Schwizer (5th in the World Ranking List) with his top-horses Carlina and Ulysse, Steve Guerdat with his Selles Français Jalisca Solier and his new horse Nino des Buissonnets, Werner Muff with Kiamon, Janika Sprunger from Basel with Uptwon Boy, who is in the team for the first time and Swiss Champion Claudia Gisler with Touchable. Beat Mändli's Louis, who was best Swiss as sixth in the final ranking of the Grand Prix last year, is fit again after a long recreation due to an injury. But to compete in the Nations Cup seems too early for the Oldenburger gelding. He will be steadily brought back to big tasks.

CSIO-Debut for Alain Jufer

Following names are on the list of the Swiss individual riders: Christina Liebherr, Beat Mändli, Daniel Etter, Arthur Gustavo Da Silva, Theo Muff, Andreas Ott, Jane Richard Philips, Niklaus Schurtenberger, Hansueli Sprunger and Alain Jufer and – through an invitation of the organizer – the routine rider Paul Freimüller from Zurich as well as the 19 year old talented equestrienne Annina Züger from Galgenen. Liebherr, Mändli and senior Hansueli Sprunger (59) and Clarissa Crotta belong to the wider team for the European Championship riding in Madrid for the qualification for the Olympic Games, together with the five team members of St. Gallen

Arthur Gustavo Da Silva (32) was born in Brazilia, is married to a Swiss from the canton Zürich and rides the horses which Markus Fuchs used to show jump. For the first time he is riding for his second home country. Eight years ago "Tuca" competed for Brazil with his mare Retsina. For Alain Jufer it's the first debut at the CSIO. Since six and a half years he works for Gian-Battista Lutta in Lossy. "I'm looking forward to being able to compete in St. Gallen. For the first time I have been nominated for a CSIO" was the comment of Jufer, who was fifth in the Grand Prix in Uster and in the final ranking at the 3***-tournament in Vidaubon (Fr).

CSI Hamburg at the same time

This year the CSIO St. Gallen and the CSI Hamburg are at the same time. It's not only the traditional Derby, that makes a lot of top-riders go up to the north of Germany, but also the Global Champions Tour during the tournament. Therefore there will be a few well-know German names missing in St. Gallen. But the trainer of Germany, Otto Becker, has a young, promising team coming to Switzerland, with Thomas Mühlbauer, winner of the bronze medal at the European Championship in Windsor 2009. Holger Wulschner, Andreas Knippling and Heiko Schmidt, last years second at the Hamburger Derby, complete the team. Also the Dutch are sending a young, up-coming team to the east part of Switzerland. Father Eric and son Maikel van der Vleuten, Leon Thijssen, Jur Vrieling und Piet Raymakers junior, the 29 year old son of the former Team European Champion and Olympic Medal Winner, who retired last year, have ambitions for the tickets for the European Championship.

World- and European Champions attending

Despite of Hamburg, there will be many well-known names and winners of medals at Championships at the CSIO St. Gallen. Belgium, third at the World Championship, is arriving with World-Champion Philippe Le Jeune and his winning horse Vigo d'Arsouilles. Also Jos Lansink, World Champion 2006 in Aachen, is participating. France, second at the World Championship, has a top-team, starting with Kevin Staut, first in the World Ranking List and European Champion. Along with him come Simon Delestre, Pénélope Leprevost and Olivier Guillon. The multiple Teams-World- and European Champion Nick Skelton leads a strong Britain team with Ben Maher. Ireland has Jessica Kürten and Cameron Hanley, who worked for many years in Switzerland for Gerhard Etter in Müntschemier. Also Shane Sweetnam is in the team for St. Gallen, after being successful together with Cameron Hanley in the first Nations-Cup of the Top League in La Baule.

With Rich Fellers, Margie Engle, Ashlee Bond, Charlie Jayne und Christine McCrea strong show jumpers are expected from the United States. The 53 years old Margie Engle is one of the most successful riders ever from the States. She won over 190 Grand Prix's and has over 20 victories in Nations-Cups. 2006 she was a member of the US-Silver-Team at the World Championship in Aachen. Rich Fellers was second at the World Cup Final 2009 in Gothenburg.

To be mentioned is Khaled al Eid, the individual entrant from the upcoming riding-nation Saudi Arabia, who was third at the Olympic Games 2000 in Sydney.

Grand Prix with the highest price winning money in Switzerland

The price winning money of the 16th CSIO St. Gallen is, including special prices and gifts, still CHF 900'000. The Longines Grand Prix on Sunday, June 5th, with CHF 300'000, stays the highest Grand Prix in Switzerland. As all eight tournaments of the TOP League the FEI Nations Cup is endowed with € 200'000. The Wegelin Speed Class on Saturday brings a total of CHF 80'000. "The budget of our top-event is about three million Swiss Francs", states Peter Stössel, President of the Organizing Committee.