

Agility Team GB Report for Agility Liaison Council

European Open Germany 2015

The 2015 European Open was held on 24-26 July 2015 at Reiterstadion Gut Matheshof in Reiden, Germany (the same venue as the 2011 FCI World Championships). Attendance was approximately 800 dogs from 37 FCI countries. The venue was fantastic with good facilities for an event of this size. The agility competition was held outside on sand surrounded by spectator seating.

The weather was hotter than forecasted with temperatures over 30c each day. However this had no apparent effect on the dogs' performance as ample cool facilities were provided.

Judges were from Japan, Finland and Germany and had designed fast and flowing courses, typical of FCI courses and once again the small and medium height dogs had more challenging courses.

The overall standard of competition was very high but the team rose well to the challenge. The level of competition at the European Open continued to increase through faster and more demanding courses. The speed and accuracy of the dogs & handlers this year was outstanding. Dogs were running faster and requiring more technical handling and faster handlers.

The handlers brought into the team after the Performance Weekend performed well. Many gained multiple clear rounds.

Travel and logistical arrangements went to plan as a result of improvements made after 2014.

Overall, this was a successful trip where Agility Team GB gained more experience of international competition and identified further improvement opportunities and areas to be addressed to increase the team's competitiveness.

Results:

- Five members of the team ran in the Sunday finals, three finishing in the top 20:
 - Lucy Osbourne & Fling (small) 12th
 - Christine Wynngate-Wynn & Zev (medium) 9th
 - David Munnings & Boss (large) 5th.

These were fantastic results given this year formidable competition.

Ongoing support had been received from the team sponsors: The Kennel Club; CSJ; First Contact; Nottingham Trent University; Agility1st; Euro Tunnel and Gencon.

Thanks were also due to the Coaching Team, all of whom had worked extremely hard helping to organise and prepare the dogs & handlers for this competition: Rachel

Richardson (Team Vet); Marc Saunders & Natasha Wise (Assistants); Maria Johnson (Physiotherapist), Steve Croxford (Technical Coach); Ruth MacGill (Handler Fitness Coach) and Gina Sansom (KC WDA Events Coordinator)..

Karen Laker had also supported Mr Laker and many of the team members.

Supporters and grooms who attended the event had also played a big part in supporting and encouraging the team.

FCI World Championships Italy 2015

The venue for the World Championships in Bologna was fantastic and while smaller than previous venues, created an exciting atmosphere for a competition of this level.

Team GB went to Italy feeling strong in the large team category (silver medal winners in 2014) and confident in medium/small height. Five handlers new to the World Championships were on this year's team; for them it was a fantastic learning and development experience.

Clearly the highlight of the championships was the Large team winning the gold medal. This was even more exciting as last year's winners (France) finished 3rd making this a very close competition. In fact the competition was close right up until the last few dogs ran. Naarah Cuddy's performance in the individual large class was another highlight. This was Naarah's first time at an international competition. She finished 26th in the jumping class and 5th overall. She was in a medal position until the last two dogs ran.

The level of competition in the medium and small height category remained extremely high. The GB teams consisted of a mix of experienced and new handlers who worked well together. Natasha Wise and Dizzy (three times world champions) found themselves on fast courses with varying challenging handling options to consider. Other handlers found the courses challenging, very fast and throwing up multiple options. The coaching team will continue to focus their efforts on helping handlers in these height groups develop their skills for international competition.

There was a fantastic team spirit and members of the team all supported each other.

Results:

- Large team - 3rd in jumping round, 2nd in agility round = 1st overall Gold medal. This team won the silver medal in 2014,
- Medium team - 8th overall, an improvement from 15th in 2014,
- Large individual Naarah Cuddy - 5th overall. Highest place in 2014 was Greg & Detox (7th)
- Matt Goodliffe - top 15 in team jumping,
- Charlotte Harding - top 10 team agility,
- Natasha Wise - 2nd team jumping, 3rd team agility,

The Coaching Team had provided invaluable support for the team. Hana McNicolas had kindly taken time off work to step in at the last minute to provide veterinary cover on the outbound coach trip. Once again the team's sponsors had provided great support.

Mark Laker
Team Manager