



Amy Cranfield



Georgie Smith



Rosie Stevens



Vicky Watts



Rosie Stevens competing in France

were invited to attend. Despite the distance it was an opportunity that the team of Julia Sheppard (myself) and Hot Prospect, Rosie Stevens and Van Neolux, Shirley Stagg and Possibilities and Lisa Kenyon and Cyndaquil couldn't refuse, and we readily prepared ourselves for the competition. The team was supported by Lucy and Isabella Stagg and chef d'equipe Barbara Smith.

It was a very early start on Thursday morning; we all met Stephen Gardiner from Eastelm horse box hire at Levington at 3.30am to load the lorry and set the horses on their way. Arriving at Dover in good time for our ferry, the horses followed closely behind on the next crossing. Continuing our journey in France we headed south to Paris, by which time it was getting very hot about 33°C and the air con was struggling to keep up. We finally arrived at Lamotte-Beuvron and the Parc Equestrian about 5pm feeling rather tired and hot. Nobody seemed to speak very much English

but we did meet up with Madame Maridie Bourgade who showed us our stables and around the complex. Finally the horses arrived after a 14 hour journey, just as it decided to thunderstorm. They all came off the lorry no worse for the wear but tired. At 12pm the next day we all met at the main FFE hospitality area for the drawn order. Great Britain 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 and said how pleased we were to be participating, in pigeon French. We were first to go in the parade of competing nations and led the other teams around the arena carrying the Union Jack. When the parade finished it was time for the warm up round. As we had been drawn first we were quickly back through the tunnel and into the main arena. Rosie set the standard with a flawless clear round, instilling us all with confidence. Three further clears set the precedent for the other teams to follow.

The following day started with an early ride out on the horses. The weather was warming up and by the time we had fed and mucked out the sun was out in full force. After a relaxing morning we headed to the stables to plait and bath ready for the jumping. The course walk was at 4.30 and 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 was Lisa, who rode a great positive clear round. I 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 confident and bold clear round. At the end of round one we ended on four faults in joint third place, with France behind Ivory Coast and Senegal. The last day of competition started hot again. It was to be a 1.30pm course walk so it was a busy morning getting horses plaited and bathed. The course was walked and jumping started at 2.30pm. The course was long with 12 fences, a double and a treble. Jumping 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 for a second clear round; I think she was enjoying the celebratory music that blares out when a clear round is achieved. I had lovely round, just tipping the third part of the treble which was a great shame, and Shirley unfortunately had two down, but she was still pleased with how Possibilities jumped. Finishing on 12 faults after two rounds, we then waited nervously to see if we'd 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, I had the third fence

and Shirley went clear. There was some amazing jumping from the other teams and also some very fast times. The final results ended with The Ivory Coast first, France second, Senegal and Suriname joint third and Britain coming 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. Everybody has been extremely friendly and helpful and watching how other nations look after their horses and ride has been quite educational.

Thanks to all the support at home over the weekend; we had all had a wonderful experience and are extremely happy with our lovely group of horses. A special mention must go to our sponsors, who either donated cash or team kit; Kate Negus Saddlery, Coltsfoot Equestrian, Kings of Suffolk, Ariat, EH Haylage, Charnwood Milling, Premier Equine, Red House Farm, Levington, Nigel Western Equine, Poplar Park Equestrian Centre, Bed Down Horse Bedding, Carr & Day & Martin and Class Act Embroidery.



Laura Smith



Intermediate team

