

WM26

TOURNAMENT MAGAZINE



Vaulting

Ursula Levett is living her World Championship dream

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Opening Ceremony

A show that delights everyone

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**OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT INFORMATION
FROM THE FEI WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2026**

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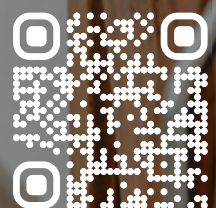
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German Dressage Gold Celebrated on the Katschhof

Katharina Hemmer, Raphael Netz, Frederic Wandres, and Isabell Werth visit the World Championship show in the city centre.

The premiere was an overwhelming success from the start. As part of the World Equestrian Championships, the WM show "Welcome Home" takes place every evening at 7 p.m. right in the heart of the city, on the Katschhof. And could there have been a better script than this? At the opening on Wednesday evening, Germany's golden dressage team beamed out at an enthusiastically applauding crowd.

Katharina Hemmer, Raphael Netz, Frederic Wandres, and Isabell Werth were celebrated together with national coach Monica Theodorescu. Speaking with host Robert Esser, Werth described it as "a dream come true." Twenty years ago, the most successful rider of all time had already been welcomed in the city centre as world champion with that 2006 team. The gold-medal team from back then – which included



In the spotlight: the German dressage team was also celebrated in the city center. Photo: Heike Lachmann

Heike Kemmer, Hubertus Schmidt, and Nadine Capellmann – had just taken to the stage shortly before the current gold-winning team and was celebrated just as enthusiastically.

There was also special applause for Katharina Hemmer during the Champions Ceremony. She arrived late to the Katschhof stage because she had

been held up at doping control. Her magnificent ride on Denoix, which the national coach described as a shining moment, was a key building block in Germany's dressage team gold.

By the way: all World Championship champions will be honoured as part of the WM show in the shadow of Aachen Cathedral. (red)

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 **STAWAG**

First medal: German dressage team confidently extends its gold streak

It wins at the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 ahead of Great Britain and Denmark. In the “Lambertz Prize,” world number one Cathrine Laudrup-Dufour earns the highest score of the day.

At that moment, it was only of secondary importance that Denmark's Cathrine Laudrup-Dufour, riding Mount St. John, won the Grand Prix with 82.837, ahead of Belgian double European champion Justin Verboomen on Zonik Plus (80.885) and Britain's defending champion Charlotte Fry on Glamourdale (80.311), with Isabell Werth (Rheinberg) on Wendy de Fontaine finishing fourth on 79.876. What mattered was that the 57-year-old had collected the final crucial points needed to lead her team into first place. The celebrations were huge as the German dressage team, just as at the 2006 World Equestrian Games, once again won the title at a home World Championship, finishing with 235.663 points ahead of Great Britain (231.445) and Denmark (229.426).

For Werth, it was her tenth World Championship gold medal overall. For the German dressage team, it was their fourth consecutive team gold, following the 2024 Olympic Games and the 2023 and 2025 European Championships. Most recently, at the 2022 World Championships in Herning, Denmark, Germany had to settle for bronze when Denmark won gold, in the absence of then Germany's most successful rider Jessica von Bredow-Werndl. “It is a special moment when everything comes together like this. I'm very grateful that after a few withdrawals, we ended up putting together the right team,” said Monica Theodorescu, who was able to stay relaxed over the two Grand Prix days, as Germany stood first in both the intermediate and final standings after each of her riders.

World Championship debutant Raphael Netz (Moosbach) had set the tone. “It went super, it was a lot of fun, Camelot gave me a great feeling,” beamed Netz after his strong performance. Riding Great Escape Camelot, he did make one costly mistake in the one-tempi changes, but 73.338 percent was the reward for an otherwise good test. For the 27-year-old, a multiple European U25 champion, it is his first World Championship. The rider took responsibility for the mistake himself. “I changed something in the preparation in the flying changes. I wanted to start the changes with a bigger



Lap of honour: the German dressage team received a well-deserved celebration after its victory in the team competition. Photo: Michael von Fissenne

canter stride. Camelot doesn't yet know that in competition and wanted to take two or three more strides like before we changed. That caused the mistake,” he explained. “If there were school grades, I'd give myself a B+.”

Late in the afternoon, Britain's Becky Moody on Jagerbomb briefly took the lead, but Frederic Wandres (Hagen) reclaimed it at the end of the day. “Just under 76 percent,” Wandres said with a laugh about his 75.963 percent, and admitted honestly: “A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I was a bit frayed at the edges, I could feel the pressure on my shoulders. I knew that already from Paris and the European Championship, but it's different whether you are riding for the team or for yourself. In any case, I'm very happy with how it went now – even if the piaffes can still be better.” They were the only slight point of criticism in an otherwise very good ride.

“Freddy showed a great round; that was a strong Grand Prix, perhaps even his best so far. The horse went fresh and fault-free, and he rode very precisely,” said Theodorescu. She was no less pleased with Netz: “It's a shame about the mistake

in the one-tempi changes. There, ‘Raphi’ was quicker than his horse and surprised him.”

”

When I saw the score on the board, I got goosebumps.

Katharina Hemmer

Second day, high noon – and Britain's Carl Hester had just taken the individual lead on Fame with 77.314 percent. But then came Katharina Hemmer (Borchen-Etteln) on Denoix. “From now on, we'll spell Hemmer with an ‘a’ – because that was a hammer,” the national coach exclaimed, making a play on words. “That was incredible, simply wonderful, what Kata produced at a championship just like that. From line to line, it just kept getting better,” Theodorescu said enthusiastically, as the 32-year-old delivered a flaw-

less round, the best Grand Prix she has ever ridden, and was rewarded with 79.224 percent – a personal best.

“When I saw the score on the board, I got goosebumps,” said the rider who had finished fourth in the Special at the European Championships and this time ended up fifth. “Even in the warm-up, everything was going well, and I asked Hubertus why he was breathing so heavily. Everything was going according to plan,” she said with a laugh. Hubertus Schmidt is her trainer, the man who brought Denoix into the sport and who, 20 years earlier, had also been part of Germany's gold-medal team at the World Equestrian Games in Aachen with Wansuela Suerte.

Just like Werth. Twenty years later, she is still there. When she entered the arena on Wendy de Fontaine, the German team's lead over the British was already comfortable. Even so, the 57-year-old made things exciting again with a small mistake in the rein-back and a costly error in the one-tempi changes. In the end, however, 79.876 points and fourth place in the Grand Prix were enough. But in the Special on Friday, where the first individual medals will be decided, the cards will be reshuffled. (rau)

“You can feel joy everywhere”

In this interview, Dr. Hermann Bühlbecker talks about the enthusiasm at the start of the World Championships.

Dr. Bühlbecker, the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 were officially opened on Tuesday. That of course meant that you, as co-host, invited guests to the Media Night that evening. How did the evening go from your perspective?

Hermann Bühlbecker: I think we all felt that these World Championships are going to be something very special. The atmosphere was excellent. Media Night brings together people from sport, business, politics, culture, and the media – and that once again happened this time. For me, it was a great pleasure to host this evening together with the ALRV.

It is almost a tradition that Aachen welcomes royal visitors. But having several royal houses here at the same time has never happened before. Was that also something special for you?

Bühlbecker: Absolutely. It underlines the international significance of these World Championships. As hosts, we can be proud of that.



Dr. Hermann Bühlbecker (centre), sole owner of the Aachen-based Henry Lambertz gingerbread and chocolate factory, has been supporting equestrian sport for a long time.

Photo: ALRV/Andreas Steindl

The first medal of these World Championships was awarded on Wednesday evening in the FEI Dressage World Championship team competition for the Lambertz Prize. The dressage competitions in the main stadium are a special feature of these World Championships. How did you like the competition?

Bühlbecker: I was deeply impressed. Dressage at this level combines precision, elegance, and a partnership between horse and rider built over many years.

As sponsor of this competition, you had the honour of presenting the gold medal to Team Germany at the end.

Could the World Championships have had a better start?

Bühlbecker: Of course, in a moment like that, your heart beats a little faster. Being able to present the gold medal to the German team is certainly one of the most beautiful moments of these World Championships.

How do you view the first days of these FEI World Championships overall?

Bühlbecker: You can feel joy, enthusiasm, and international friendship everywhere. That is exactly why so many people love the CHIO and these World Championships.

What are you looking forward to in the coming days?

Bühlbecker: I'm simply looking forward to experiencing top-class sport every day and seeing the delighted faces of the people. These are the kind of memories that stay with you for a long time. (red)

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Cathrine Laudrup-Dufour Lays Down an Early Marker

The Danish European silver medallist delivered an impressive performance on Mount St. John Freestyle in the Grand Prix with 82.376 percent to take victory in the class. The Danish team won bronze behind the British and the victorious Germans.

Right now, everyone is talking about Belgium's Justin Verboomen and his exceptional stallion Zonic Plus. But it was Denmark's Cathrine Laudrup-Dufour who arrived in Aachen for the World Championships as the current world number one in dressage. In the Grand Prix, which decided the team standings, the 34-year-old and her now 17-year-old Mount St. John Freestyle laid down an early marker. With 82.376 percent, she won the Grand Prix and secured the bronze medal for the Danish team, just as she had at the 2025 European Championships.

"Freestyle was absolutely on point today. This is the biggest arena we've ever ridden in," the likeable Dane enthused after her test. "I had a good feeling and knew I had shown a good round." The intermediate scores had already indicated as much, as eights came thick and fast from the outset, and the Dane was almost constantly around two percentage points ahead of the then leader Katharina Hemmer with Denoix (79.224). "Yes, it was a strong performance. And I did have some judges on my side who even gave over 83 percent." The scores from the seven judges ranged from 79.783 to an impressive 84.130 percent.

"But it secured bronze for the Danish team, and I'm proud of Freestyle and my team," said the Dane, though she had little hope of gold or silver, even though Isabell Werth for Germany and Britain's final rider Charlotte Fry had yet to go. "I think silver is too far away as well." She was right.

Her performance was faultless, even if there was a small misunderstanding between her and Freestyle in the second piaffe. "I opened the piaffe a little too early, and Freestyle actually wanted to do a few more steps. Then I said, 'okay,' that can happen. But for the first day in the big arena, I'm very happy with our performance."

And naturally, attention was already turning to Friday: Verboomen, Laudrup-Dufour, Charlotte Fry, or perhaps dressage queen Isabell Werth – the battle for the first individual medals in Friday's Grand Prix Special is more open than it has been in a long time. "I wanted to get



She has every reason to smile: Cathrine Laudrup-Dufour's first appearance in Aachen was highly promising. Denmark won bronze, and the European vice-champion took victory in the class on Mount St. John Freestyle with 82.376 percent.

Photo: Dagmar Meyer-Roeger

off to a good start in the big arena, and we managed that." And in the Special, with the top 30 riders, anything is possible. In the Grand Prix, Verboomen scored 80.885 percent, defending British champion Fry on Glamourdale 80.311, and Werth 79.244, with the four of them filling the top places.

Verboomen came to Aachen with the credentials of a double European champion. But already at the 2025 European Championships in Crozet, France, Laudrup-Dufour had been right on his heels. In the Special, the Belgian and his then only nine-year-old stallion were ahead by just 0.684 percent, and in the freestyle by a razor-thin 0.143 percent. In the Grand Prix, the Dane had been the only rider to score over 80 percent (80.823), winning ahead of Werth (79.224) and Verboomen (79.094). The fight for the individual medals is set to be

tighter and more exciting than ever.

Cathrine Dufour, who studied leisure and sports management, is 34 years old and has been married since 2023 to Rasmine Laudrup, daughter of former Danish professional footballer Brian Laudrup. The couple live with their one-year-old daughter Palma in Fredensborg, north of Copenhagen. Laudrup-Dufour's biography reads much like that of many riders: she first got into the saddle on a pony at the age of five, began competing at twelve, and collected numerous European Championship medals in the youth ranks. Her transition to senior level was seamless. She was part of the Danish team at the Olympic Games in 2016, 2021, and 2024, most recently winning silver in Paris with Freestyle.

The high point of her career so far, however, remains the 2022 World Championships in Herning,

Denmark, where the Danish dressage team won gold ahead of Great Britain and Germany, arriving in Aachen as defending champions. For both individual competitions too, the Dane – who had won all five dressage tests that year in Aachen, including the "Grand Dressage Prize of Aachen," on Vamos Amigo and Bohemian – was considered among the favourites. But in Herning came the coming of age of the jet-black stallion Glamourdale, who under Fry won both gold in the Special and in the freestyle. Laudrup-Dufour, on Vamos Amigo, finished second both times ahead of the Netherlands' Dinja van Liere on Hermes.

At the end of 2023, the now 17-year-old mare Mount St. John Freestyle moved from the stable of British Olympic champion Charlotte Dujardin to Denmark. Just over six months later, Laudrup-Dufour and the mare finished fifth individually in Paris in addition to team silver. And, as mentioned above, at the European Championships the Dane and her horse were beaten only by the narrowest of margins by Verboomen – twice.

Laudrup-Dufour prepared meticulously for the World Championships in Aachen and even skipped the Danish Championships to finish her new freestyle. It premiered at the five-star Nations Cup show in Falsterbo, Sweden, in July. There, Freestyle won the Grand Prix with 83.178 percent and the freestyle with 88.420. The new music, with its soft-rock feel, was immediately appealing, though the demanding freestyle was not yet as polished as the previous one. The crowd erupted in applause on the final centre-line with piaffe and passage to the music of "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now."

Whether Laudrup-Dufour can once again be stopped by Verboomen, Fry, or even Werth will become clear on Friday from 10:50 a.m. in the Grand Prix Special. One day later, from 7 p.m. under floodlights, comes the freestyle to music, where the second individual World Championship gold medal will be decided – in front of 45,000 spectators in the main stadium. (rau)

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Aachen's message to the equestrian world: Welcome home!

Photo: Andreas Steindl

Breathtaking: synchronized jumping, horse-style.
Photo: Andreas Steindl

Wow, What a Show!

At the opening ceremony, the message was clear: "Welcome Home." Regal carriages met legends of the sport and thrilling show acts.

Under the motto "Welcome Home," the main stadium was transformed on Tuesday evening into an emotional celebration of equestrian sport during the opening ceremony – setting the stage for two weeks of World Championship atmosphere at Allianz Park with royal guests, moving moments, and an impressive water show. In a sea of flags, emotion, and thunderous applause, one thing was evident from the first moment: in Aachen, "Welcome Home" is not a slogan, but a feeling. A feeling that swept through the stands and created goosebumps again and again throughout the evening.

The ceremony opened with the parade of the 686 athletes—accompanied by the waving flags of the 65 participating nations, dancers glowing in purple and gold, numerous horses, and a royal splendour the likes of which Aachen had never seen before. With the Netherlands, Denmark, and Great Britain, no fewer than three royal stables presented their stately carriages. Her Royal Highness the Princess of Orange, Her Royal Highness Princess Benedikte of Denmark, and Her Royal Highness Elena de Borbón,

Infanta of Spain all came to honour the championship and give the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 a truly regal opening.

Against this backdrop, familiar personalities who had already left their mark on Aachen 20 years ago also took centre stage: the world champions of the 2006 World Equestrian Games – including dressage queen Isabell Werth, jumping champion Jos Lansink, and driving legend Michael Freund. And at the

latest when the name Zara Tindall, niece of His Majesty King Charles III, was mentioned – and with it the memory of her eventing World Championship gold in 2006 at this very venue—sporting greatness and royal glamour merged completely.

FEI President Ingmar De Vos summed up this special power of equestrian sport perfectly: He said: "Here in Aachen, we will celebrate the diversity of the participating nations and cultures and show the

world the power of sport to bring together people from all corners of the globe through shared values such as respect, friendship, excellence, and, not least, the love of horses."

Eventing legend Andrew Hoy gave voice to that spirit as he recited the athletes' oath on behalf of all competitors. Looking ahead, Stefanie Peters added: "Now the competitions begin, now every moment counts. Ahead of us lie two weeks of magnificent equestrian sport and an atmosphere that will radiate far beyond this stadium," said the president of the organizing Aachen-Laurensberger Rennverein.

The musical heartbeat of the evening came from "Knallblech," who got the stadium rocking with party anthems, brass music, their own DJ beats, and boundless energy. Show rider Lisa Röckener captivated the audience with her performance, as did Laury Tisseur, who won spectators' hearts with his modern interpretation of the "Hungarian Post." And when young riders from the German national squads presented the six disciplines, it became powerfully clear what the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 stand for: six



Spectacular: the water show.

Photo: Andreas Steindl



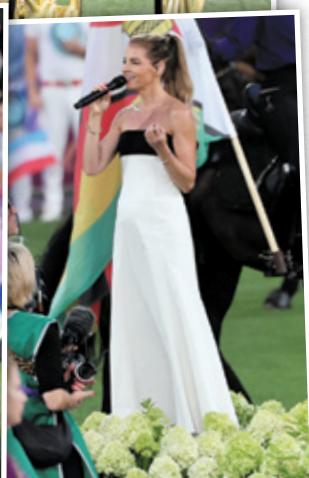
Top: Pure elegance: the royal carriages.

Bottom left: A true Aachen touch: the Öcher Klenkes was part of the choreography.

Bottom centre: Opened the World Championships: FEI President Ingmar de Vos.

Bottom right: Sang the national anthem: Yvonne Catterfeld.

Fots: Andreas Steindl



transforming the name Aachen into music. Combined with the Grand Quadrille of the German State Studs, the result was a fascinating fusion of music, precision, and elegance. In doing so, Marc Vogler added yet another brilliant touch to an evening he had already shaped musically from the start: earlier, he had accompanied singer Yvonne Catterfeld on the piano as she opened the evening with her heartfelt interpretation of the German national anthem.

The grand finale brought one last pure goosebump moment: as the stadium darkened, a water show began that transformed the main arena into another world. Fountains danced to electronic beats while coloured beams of light bathed the grass in shimmering blue, violet, and gold. By the end, the people in the main stadium had not merely watched an opening ceremony – they had experienced it. And after this evening, one thing is certain: the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 have begun—and they did so with a promise. Those who come here do not come only for a championship. They come home. Welcome home!

Another emotional highlight followed with the premiere of the hymn specially composed for this championship by Cologne composer Marc Vogler, who developed a sequence of notes from the letters A-A-C-H-E,

(red)

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Media Night: Prominent guests from royal families and Hollywood

The Media Night is high on glamour and celebrity appeal. A storm of flashbulbs on the purple carpet.

Flashbulbs, radiant faces, and extravagant outfits: on what is probably the most famous red carpet in international equestrian sport — rolled out this year in purple to match the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 — stars from around the world mingled at the exclusive Media Night. Together with co-host Hermann Bühlbecker, the organizers invited guests to a festive gala evening on opening day.

One of the most sought-after photos of the evening was Hollywood star Ed Westwick. Wearing a dark suit and sunglasses, the actor — known as Chuck Bass from the series *Gossip Girl* — stepped into Allianz Park. Together with his wife Amy Jackson, actress and model, he patiently posed for the many photographers before being warmly welcomed by Hermann Bühlbecker, sole owner of the Aachen-based gingerbread and chocolate company Henry Lambertz.

Together with Stefanie Peters, president of the Aachen-Laurensberger Rennverein (ARLV), he also welcomed numerous representatives of European royal houses: Queen Mary, wife of Denmark's King Frederik X, paid the World Championships an unannounced private visit. Also attending were Zara Tindall, niece of His Majesty King Charles III; Dutch Crown Princess Catharina-Amalia, Princess of Orange; Princess Benedikte of Denmark; and Elena de Borbón, Infanta of Spain. Over the course of the evening, Federal Minister Dorothee Bär, singer Yvonne Catterfeld, actress Luna Schweiger, and Simon Rolfes, managing director for sport at Bayer 04 Leverkusen, also made an appearance.

In between, the celebrities made their way to the main stadium, where they were enchanted by the spectacular opening ceremony, during which FEI President Ingmar de Vos officially opened the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026. (red)



Top: Queen Mary of Denmark (centre) paid a private visit to the World Championships, pictured with ARLV President Stefanie Peters and Lambertz owner Hermann Bühlbecker.

Left: Hollywood couple: actor Ed Westwick with his wife Amy Jackson. Bottom left: Mambo No. 5 singer Lou Bega.

Bottom right: Football figures together: Bayer Leverkusen managing director Simon Rolfes (left) and former Germany goalkeeper Uli Stein. Photos: Andreas Steindl



Gold Through Team Spirit?

Eventing: Germany's riders want to make the most of the positive atmosphere.

The World Championships have now begun for the eventers. Yesterday, Libussa Lübbecke was the first German rider to get underway in the dressage phase with Caramia. There had been a moment of concern on Wednesday when the mare was sent to the holding box during the vet check and then had to trot up once more. The decision by the ground jury caused surprise within the German team, as there reportedly appeared to be no sign of lameness, but fortunately Caramia was passed fit to compete and produced an excellent test to score 31.3 penalties to open Germany's championship.

Yesterday afternoon, after the editorial deadline for this issue of the tournament magazine, Malin Hansen-Hotopp was due to start with Carlitos Quidditch K. This morning, Julia Krajewski and Uelzener's Nickel face the first phase of the eventing competition, while Olympic champion Michael Jung and Chipmunk are scheduled for



Ready for the home World Championships: Michael Jung, Malin Hansen-Hotopp, Julia Krajewski, Libussa Lübbecke, and Christoph Wahler (from left to right) will compete for Germany in eventing.

Photo: Stefan Lafrentz

this afternoon. Before him, Christoph Wahler will also compete with D'Accord, but as an individual rather than for the team classification.

Germany goes into battle as defending world champion and reigning European champion and is among the medal contenders. Julia Krajewski describes the current mood as focused and "positively tense."

The weather will not be a problem. At least that is the view of An-

dreas Dibowski, the eventing team's cross-country trainer. The horses, he says, are being cooled down before every phase.

Frenchman Rodolphe Scherer is standing in as national coach for Peter Thomsen, who has been sidelined since a riding accident in June. The interim coach says the team spirit is very strong. The many phone calls the riders and coaching staff have had with Peter Thomsen in re-

cent days have also helped. In a way, he is still part of Aachen.

For Scherer, the new role he took on in June comes with a great deal of responsibility. But he remains relaxed about it since he has already been working alongside Thomsen as cross-country coach for four years. "There isn't one boss in the German team," says Scherer. "We are a team." His job is not that difficult, he adds, because so many people are supporting him. The eventers want the good atmosphere to carry them forward. "A bad atmosphere drains a lot of energy," says Krajewski.

Olympic champion Michael Jung reveals that even the horses sense that something special is happening now. "My Chipmunk notices that I'm spending more time with him. So, he knows something special is coming."

A total of 88 riders from 27 nations are competing in eventing. 14 teams are fighting for the team medals. (ebr)

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If You Want Gold, You Must Take the A Route

Versatility across country: Riders aiming for the title must navigate with risk

The cross-country phase of eventing at the FEI World Championships 2026 in Aachen's Soers will once again offer more than six hours of top-level sport and breathtaking rides. The course must meet the highest international standards. Riders will have to show absolute precision at top speed, excellent reactions at angled jumps, and extreme stamina for the hilly sections.

The legendary Aachen cross-country course has been expanded for the World Championship competition with newly created tracks and loops. Even so, there are still two major water complexes with drop jumps into the water, followed by technically extremely narrow "brushes" or "houses" on exact lines. There is also the "Normandy Wall," a powerful combination that requires the horses to jump up precisely and then immediately back down again.

As is always the case at this level, almost all difficult combinations offer alternative lines (options). These detours are clearly safer and flatter to jump, but they cost time—often ten to 20 seconds per complex. Riders who have already picked up faults or who still want to secure a good result for the team standings use these options. Anyone who wants individual gold must take the direct, risky "A route" throughout.

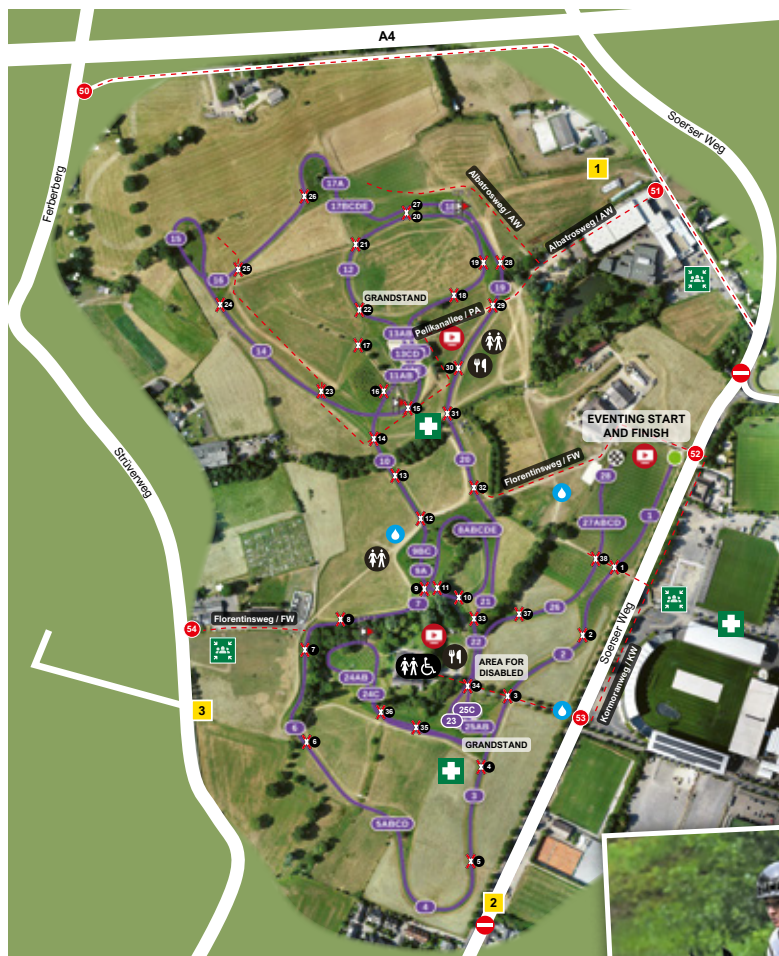
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The course is fantastic.

Michael Jung,
Olympic champion in eventing

The demanding course was designed by Italian course builder Giuseppe Della Chiesa, after long-time course chief Rüdiger Schwarz retired. Della Chiesa already designed the challenging course for the 2022 World Championship in Pratoni del Vivaro, and he is now bringing exactly that style to Aachen.

"The course is fantastic," says Michael Jung, one of Germany's favourites. The footing is excellent, the grass beautifully green. Jung is also impressed by the outstanding obstacles. "I think I'll walk the course several more times," he said on Wednesday.



Andreas Dibowski, cross-country coach of the German team, said that all starters will receive an intensive briefing. "The riders will know everything that awaits them in each complex," said Dibowski, who strongly praised the course designer. "Nothing is unfair, there are no random jumps, and good riding will help."

The German eventing team manager, Annette Wyrwoll, also praised the organizers: "Everything on the course has been perfectly watered." So, nothing now stands in the way of Saturday's major event in Aachen's Soers – except for a whole series of obstacles that horse and rider must overcome.

The obstacles are made of solid, immovable materials such as massive tree trunks, heavy timber, thick hedges, earth banks, stone walls, and water ditches, which, unlike show-jumping fences, do not give way or fall. Many modern fixed obstacles have concealed safety release mechanisms that allow the heavy wooden element to collapse or release in the event of a hard impact by

Julia Krajewski, the 2022 individual silver medallist and team world champion, believes she has a very good chance in the cross-country phase with Uelzener's Nickel.

Foto: nordphoto GmbH/Witke

the horse, to prevent serious falls.

A cross-country course consists of tight turns and exact lines. Without signals, the horse does not know which obstacle comes next. The rider shortens or lengthens the horse's canter strides before the obstacle so that the horse can take off from the perfect distance. Without this help, the horse will often arrive at the jump either too close or too far away.

At the 2022 World Championship in Pratoni del Vivaro, the cross-country test played a key role and was the turning point in Germany's eventual

team gold medal. After a disappointing dressage phase for the German squad, the riders delivered incredible rounds and worked their way into the lead.

The 5,600-meter course designed by Della Chiesa was extremely undulating. The constant ups and downs demanded maximum fitness from both horse and rider and repeatedly threw the combinations off balance.

At the 2024 Olympic Games in the park of the Palace of Versailles, Michael Jung on Chipmunk took the lead in the individual standings with a fault-free round inside the optimum time. By contrast, Germany's medal hopes in the team event were dashed that day when Christoph Wahler, who is now competing as an individual rider, fell at the first water complex. Julia Krajewski delivered an excellent, stylistically clean round without any jumping faults and picked up only 4.8 penalty points for a slight time overrun.

And at the 2025 European Championship in Blenheim (England), the cross-country phase went outstand-



ingly well for the German eventing team and effectively decided the outcome in favour of eventual team gold.

The British are now looking for revenge in Germany. They regularly dominate demanding cross-country tracks. At the FEI Eventing Nations Cup 2026 in Bicton (England), the team delivered a fault-free cross-country performance and defended the title with a massive lead. (ebr)

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A Home World Championship to End It All

Vaulters Kathrin Meyer and Thomas Brüsewitz speak ahead of their final championship.

With Kathrin Meyer and Thomas Brüsewitz, two defining figures of German vaulting are in the spotlight, for whom this World Championship will also mark the end of a long and exceptionally successful championship career. Meyer, who has already triumphed twice in Aachen and in 2025 became the first vaulter ever to win the World Cup Final title for the third time in a row, and Brüsewitz, who together with national coach Kai Vorberg is the current record winner of the "Preis der Sparkasse" at CHIO Aachen, are traveling there highly motivated and with great respect for the competition. In this joint interview, they talk about the special magic of a championship on home soil, the incomparable moment of entering the Aachen circle, and why this World Championship means far more to them than "just" the last major competition.

What makes a World Championship year special for you, especially with a home World Championship? What are your expectations?

Kathrin Meyer: Every year, it is special for us to come to Aachen and be allowed to compete there. This time, we're there at the same time as the other disciplines, which creates a completely different feeling, and you can connect much more with all the athletes. Aachen is a venue where the conditions are simply perfect, so it can only be great.

Thomas Brüsewitz: I can only agree. A World Championship in your own country, and then also with my favourite organizer – that is something very special that we have all been eagerly anticipating. It has been more than ten years since a championship was held in Germany. That is exactly what every vaulter dreams of. I hope we can present our sport in the best possible way on such a stage. Vaulting is a sport that can truly inspire people, and that is what we want to convey to the outside world. Hopefully we can do that by showing what we can do and what we love.

Thomas, you mentioned the 2015 European Championships. You were already here back then and know the atmosphere in the covered stadium. What does it feel like in the circle?

Brüsewitz: In 2015, the atmosphere was incredible. We were practically carried into the circle; there was a sea of German flags, and the backdrop was simply amazing. It was truly uplifting to enter there. Honestly, nothing in the years since has come



At her final World Championship, Germany's top vaulter Kathrin Meyer wants to aim for the very highest again. Photo: ALRV/Jasmin Metzner

close. I hope that this time, too, there will be many spectators there waving German flags for us.

You both know what it feels like to win in Aachen. What are your goals for the World Championship? What have you set out to do?

Meyer: Of course, my goal is to be among the frontrunners. But I would say it will be a tough race. We are well prepared and will definitely give everything to be able to deliver our training performance. That applies especially to my freestyle routine. For me, it embodies this special year and the feelings that come up when you think about retiring from the sport. It is meant to show my whole journey, as well as the people and horses who have carried me along the way. It will definitely be emotional.

Brüsewitz: Above all, I want to enjoy it. I am so grateful for all this time and want to consciously take in once more what I have been able to experience over the years. It is a great honour for me to be able to be part of all this. I want to pause and take in every single moment, whether it turns out good or bad. From a sport-

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I would definitely say that it's a different kind of pressure again this year. But I'm definitely looking forward to it, and together with Gesa and Capi, it will be something very special no matter what.

Vaulter Kathrin Meyer

ing perspective, of course I will try to do my best, but that is what we always do.

For both of you, this will be the last championship after a long and successful career. Does that create extra pressure, or is there even more motivation to really deliver one more time?

Meyer: I would say there definitely is a different kind of pressure this year. Whether that comes from it being a World Championship, a home championship, or the last championship – there are many factors coming together. But I'm definitely looking forward to it, and together with Gesa and Capi, it will be something very special no matter what.

Brüsewitz: I tried not to think about it too much, but lately that has actually not worked so well anymore (laughs). I do find it difficult to deal with the question: "What are you actually going to do when all of this is over?" I am a little afraid of falling into a hole. Of course that is on my mind, but I am not letting it drive me crazy. Honestly, above all I just want to be grateful that I get to experience all of this. (red)

Team Norka wants to continue winning

In the "Sparkasse Prize," the vaulters are strong contenders for the gold medal. The youngest team member is only 15 years old.

Four consecutive CHIO victories, and reigning world and European champions: there is no question that Team Norka of the Köln-Dünnwald Vaulting Club is the team to beat. The competitions began on Thursday with the compulsory test, and on Saturday medals will be decided in the freestyle in the "Sparkasse Prize." Right in the middle of the German team is 15-year-old Larina Herpertz. Even though the "youngster" already has years of championship experience – she was part of the European Championships in 2023 – a World Championship on home soil is something special. "The whole atmosphere, everything around it, it's definitely exciting," says the schoolgirl.

Her path into elite sport began with a simple wish: "I wanted to ride and do gymnastics," she recalls. And because the Herpertz family lives very close to the stables in Köln-Dünnwald, the idea of combining riding and gymnastics



Part of Team Norka: Larina Herpertz (centre), Yaya Scheel, and coach Torben Jacobs.

Foto: Dagmar Meyer-Roeger

was an obvious one. "My parents suggested it to me. At first, I was in a youth group for a few months, then we had something like a casting at the stable. That's how it all started," Herpertz remembers.

Even though she entered a highly successful environment, the future triumphs could not be guaranteed. After the 2022 World Championships, there was a period of change, and coach Torben Jacobs built a new team. The

fact that the new group was immediately able to build on the successes of the past pleases the coach: "I think that over time we've built up a pool of high-quality coaches, lungers, and horses. That attracted more newcomers from outside. It was simply good club work. The athlete and the horse are the focus, not always primarily the big end goal."

That is also emphasized by Yaya Scheel, who joined the team together

with Larina Herpertz. "I used to ride in the traditional way as well, but I found it a shame that you're alone. I thought vaulting was a beautiful combination of teamwork and working with the horse," says the future university student. The group trains four to five times a week, twice on the horse, while the rest takes place in the training hall, on the wooden horse, or on the ground.

So, Bela Lehnen, Scheel, Philipp Goroncy, Herpertz, Fabio Ring, and Gianna Ronca (reserve: Marie Ronca) with lunge Alexandra Knauf are considered favourites. "We want to pick up where we left off last year," says Herpertz. Coach Jacobs adds a word of caution: "You must never underestimate any team at a championship. They are all here to deliver their best performance. For us it's always: one chance – and you must use it. We are superbly prepared, but we must stay alert and fight until the very last minute." (tp)

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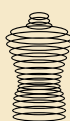


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The first event is a real test right away

For the show jumpers, things get serious on Wednesday at the World Championships. The road to the title is long.

One thing is already certain: the new world champion in show jumping will have to deliver something truly extraordinary if they want to achieve a better result at the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026 than Henrik von Eckermann did when he won the title in Herning, Denmark, in 2022. When the Swede and his exceptional horse King Edward claimed the title, the final statistics showed a score of just 0.58. Von Eckermann had not won the opening speed class and was a little more than a second slower than the day's winner, Julien Épaillard of France. But he remained fault-free throughout all the rounds and secured the title.

"King Edward and I started as favourites back then; he was at the absolute peak of his career," recalls the Swedish star rider, who will compete at this championship with Minute Man. "He has already shown some very good performances, but he is not on King Edward's level. That's why I will take it day by day. I know however that Minute Man is a horse with a lot of potential and a lot of quality," says von Eckermann, looking ahead to these World Championships.

First opportunity on Wednesday

Minute Man will get his first chance to show that quality in Wednesday's speed jumping competition (starting at 9:30 a.m.) in the "Turkish Airlines Prize." Penalty points are converted into seconds and added to each rider's time. That result is then multiplied by the coefficient 0.5. The horse-and-rider combination with the lowest score after the class goes into the following day on zero points. Every rider behind them receives a score based on the difference from the winner, and that score is carried into the subsequent rounds.

For example, in 2022 Épaillard completed the speed class as the fastest rider in 79.08 seconds. Multiplied by 0.5, that gave him a score of 39.54. The eventual world champion von Eckermann and King Edward completed the course in 80.23 seconds, which produced a score of 40.12 when rounded. Subtracting 39.54 resulted in a difference of 0.58, which was the score with which the Swede started the next round.

This year, the route to the individual world title consists of a total of four rounds. The results from the "Turkish Airlines Prize" and the "Mercedes-Benz Prize" on Thursday and Friday,



Unbeatable at the 2022 World Championships: Sweden's Henrik von Eckermann and King Edward.

Photo: Imago/TT

each with one round, also count toward the team competition, in which the medals will be decided under floodlights on Friday evening (starting at 6:50 p.m.). The best three results from each nation in each of the three rounds are added together to produce the final score.

The medals in the individual competition will then be decided on Sunday from 2:20 p.m. in the "LONGINES Prize." In the first round, the best 25 horse-and-rider combinations will start; in the second, only the top twelve remain. If two or more pairs are tied for first place, there will be a jump-off.

Germany's national coach Otto Becker had to reshuffle his plans for the German show jumping team after the nominations. André Thieme has withdrawn, and Olympic champion Christian Kukuk moves up to become first reserve. The rider from Riesenbeck will travel to the Aachen Soers with his gold-medal stallion Checker.

Ehning replaces Thieme

The 51-year-old Thieme decided against competing with Chakaria after the Nations Cup in Falsterbo, Sweden. The decisive factor was uncertainty shown by his mare at the water jump. Thieme explained: "In the interest of my horse and the team, I have decided to withdraw. We do not want to take any risks." Marcus Ehning with Coolio moves into the four-member team in Thieme's place.

The German squad is led by reigning European champion Richard Vogel with United Touch. Earlier this year at the CHIO Aachen, the pair won the Grand Prix of Aachen. Sophie Hinners had finished third there; she is also part of the team with Singclair, as is Daniel Deußer with Otello.

From Wednesday, the German show jumpers will measure themselves against the world's best – although one prominent name will be missing.

World number one Kent Farrington of the United States surprisingly announced last month that he would not take part in the World Championships.

"Greya has already competed in a championship on home soil this year, and we were fortunate enough to take the win home. Descartes has delivered some outstanding performances this season, but in

my opinion he is still developing, and a championship of this magnitude comes a little too early in his career," Farrington said. "With the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles in mind, I believe it is the right decision to prioritize that goal and continue developing both horses with their long-term future in mind."

Even without Farrington, the U.S. team is arriving with well-known names such as McLain Ward, Laura Kraut and Lillie Keenan. Alongside defending champion von Eckermann, there are several other big names in the field, including the two Swiss riders Martin Fuchs and Steve Guerdat, Nina Mallevaey of France, and Britain's Scott Brash and Ben Maher. Only two riders from the current top ten of the world rankings have not travelled to the Soers: besides Farrington, Gilles Thomas is also absent. Ermitage, the horse of the Belgian team European champion, was injured after the Grand Prix of Riesenbeck. (lv)

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Young show jumping talent

Alongside the medal decisions, younger riders will also have the chance to compete in classes that are not part of the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026. For the Young Riders, there will be the "STAWAG Prize" on Friday (from 2 p.m.), the "Sparkasse Prize" on Saturday (from 4:15 p.m.), and the "NetAachen Prize" on Sunday (from 10:30 a.m.). In addition, there is "Germany's U25 Show Jumping Cup of the German Equestrian Sport Foundation and Holger Hetzel," with the final taking place on Saturday from 1:30 p.m. in the "RWE Prize."

The First Jumps on the World Championship Stage

The training jumping may not be about medals yet, but it does provide important impressions for the horses.

When it comes to training jumping, Peter Weinberg cannot think of any particularly memorable anecdote. "At least none that you could laugh about. But there was sometimes a water ditch where things didn't quite go according to plan," recalls the 73-year-old. Born in Eschweiler and now living in Kohlscheid near Aachen, he himself enjoyed many years of international success as a show jumper. Since 2017, he has been responsible for the Belgian show jumpers, and in that time, they have won medals at World and European Championships as well as at the Olympic Games.

Accordingly, Belgium should be on the radar at the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026. And that is despite the fact that major

names from the reigning European team champions – Gilles Thomas with Ermitage Kalone and Grégory Wathelet with Bond JamesBond de Hey – will not be taking part.

Instead, Belgium will be represented in the Soers by Pieter Devos with Casual, Nicola Philippaerts with Katanga, Abdel Said with Wathnan Quaker Brimbelles, and Thibaut Spits with Impress-K van't Kattenheye. Emilie Conter with Portobella van de Fruitkorf has been nominated as reserve. Weinberg does not want to change this distribution of roles even after the public and moderated training jumping on Tuesday (from 9 a.m.) in the main stadium. "The most important test for now is the vet check, because otherwise the

World Championship can be over very quickly. For us, the training jumping serves to help the horses settle in and has nothing to do anymore with which four riders will be our team riders," emphasizes the 73-year-old.

According to the rules, five riders per nation may take part in the training jumping, the course for which will probably consist of eight obstacles including one combination. Riders and horses are expected to have 90 seconds in the arena. "You can do three, five, or ten jumps there. That's up to each individual and depends on what the horse needs," says Weinberg.

What the horse needs also depends on how much experience it already has with this special



Not as familiar with Aachen as others: Thibaut Spits and Impress-K van't Kattenheye.

Photo: Imago/Bildbyran

Aachen atmosphere. "Katanga has been here several times and doesn't need to get used to it as much as Impress. You can clearly see which horse is more impressed by the atmosphere and which is not," explains the 73-year-old, but he also adds: "Top horses rise to the occasion and know perfectly well that nothing is at stake yet in the training jumping. When it really matters later, they still perform differently." (lv)

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Moved to Aachen for the World Championships

Vaulting: Ursula Levett competes for Great Britain. Three years ago, she bravely began a new life in Germany.

There are moments in life when a single decision changes everything. For Ursula “Urssie” Levett, it was an Instagram message. A request to coach Pauline Riedl. From England to Germany. Two weeks later, the then 18-year-old packed her things, loaded her horse, said goodbye to her family, and moved to Aachen. Without any knowledge of German, without friends. But with a big dream.

“I could only say ‘hello,’ ‘goodbye,’ and ‘card payment, please,’” Levett says today with a laugh. Back then, no one would have expected that this would lead to competing at the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026.

Equestrian sport is in Ursula Levett’s blood. Her parents, Bill and Jenny, both rode in eventing. Her brother Joshua is also a successful rider in the same discipline. Ursula practically grew up among horse stalls. “Before I could walk, I was already riding,” says the vaulter. She came to this form of equestrian sport by chance. While her father was competing professionally at a World Championship, the then ten-year-old discovered vaulters on television. A trial lesson for her birthday was enough. She had found her sport.

“I wasn’t at all the most talented. I was neither especially strong nor especially flexible,” says Levett. But she had absolute determination. Her current coach and lunger Riedl sums it up: “Urssie’s greatest strength is her perseverance. I’ve rarely met anyone who fights her way through everything like she does.”

A training camp in England brought Ursula Levett and her new coach together. Riedl, who at the age of twelve became a group world champion for Germany with RSV Neuss-Grimlinghausen in Aachen in 2006, had been invited as a guest coach. Shortly afterward, Levett’s coach Julie Newell died of a brain tumour. Levett began looking for new paths – and sent Riedl a message on Instagram. She asked whether they might train together sometime.

Occasional training camps turned into regular visits to Germany. When Riedl asked why Ursula Levett didn’t move to Aachen completely, it took just two weeks for her to decide. “From a sporting perspective, there were only advantages. I knew that if I wanted to



Vaulter Ursula Levett and her coach and lunger Pauline Riedl (l.) are looking forward to the World Championship competitions in Aachen.

Photo: Elmar Brandt

see how good I could really become, then I had to take this step,” the Briton says today.

The move in 2023 meant far more than simply changing clubs. New culture, new language, new people. Within a year, Ursula Levett learned German to C1 level and at the same time

athlete, coach, lunger, and horse. “I can rely on Pauline completely,” says Levett. “That allows me to concentrate one hundred percent on my exercises.” Riedl ensures that the horse canter evenly, maintains its balance, and finds exactly the right rhythm. While spectacular acrobatics take shape above, someone below is contributing to every single movement. That blind trust has grown over years.

Not everything has gone according to plan for Levett. Last winter, she received two diagnoses: rheumatoid arthritis and celiac disease. Suddenly, swollen joints began to shape everyday training. Practice sessions had to be cancelled or shortened. “I can’t change it,” she says matter-of-factly. “But I just keep going.”

Riedl admires that attitude. “Not many people manage elite sport with rheumatoid arthritis. But Ursie doesn’t look for excuses,” says the coach. Ursula Levett even had to completely change her diet. In the shared apartment where she lives, she now has her own toaster and microwave to avoid every trace of gluten. Complaining? That is not her style.

Levett is living her dream. Her very first CHIO in Aachen already felt like an adventure. Shortly before the competition, she had to undergo surgery for appendicitis. Then her own horse got injured as well. Without hesitation, she competed on Riedl’s horse – after exactly one training session together. In fact, everything was against her starting. In the end, she was the best British participant.

Riedl does not like to talk much about results. “We never tie our goals to placings.” Instead, something else matters: clean rounds, emotion, inspiring the audience. Because vaulting is about expression, about harmony, about the connection between human and horse. And that is exactly where Levett’s strengths lie. “She has an incredible ability to interpret music and fill her exercises with feeling,” says her coach.

Anyone who meets Levett meets a cheerful young woman. You would not guess from looking at her what a path she has already travelled. How her journey continues with the Aachen 2026 chapter remains to be seen. (ebr)

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Before I could walk, I was already riding.

Ursula Levett, British vaulter

began training as a medical assistant in a general practice. “I didn’t want to do only sport. It was important to me to have something outside vaulting as well,” she explains. Today she lives in the heart of Aachen. And she has settled in: “Aachen is simply a horse city.”

In vaulting, no one wins alone. There must be absolute trust between

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Gemeinsam mit einer Biologin werteten sie Studien aus, verglichen Rohstoffqualitäten und analysierten, wie Pferde Nährstoffe bestmöglich aufnehmen und welche Nährstoffe wirklich relevant sind. Das Ergebnis war kein weiteres Supplement mit 40 Inhaltsstoffen. Es war das Gegenteil: mehrere Produkte mit einer wirklichen Spezialisierung auf das jeweilige Pferdebedürfnis – mit Inhaltsstoffen in organischer Form.



Was Tierärzte sagen

Für Dr. Arnold Hülsey war die Skepsis anfangs groß. Online-Zusatzfutter, junges Start-up, direkt an dem Handel vorbei – das klang nicht nach Seriosität. Bis er die Formulierung selbst unter die Lupe nahm.

„Was mich überzeugt hat, war nicht das Marketing – sondern die Logik dahinter. Nachvollziehbare Dosierungen, wissenschaftlich fundierte Wirkstoffauswahl, keine unnötigen Zusätze. Das sieht man selten.“

— Dr. Arnold Hülsey, Tierarzt

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— Frédéric Wandres,
Olympia-Sieger Dressur



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“I Only Give Pointers to Improve the Riding”

The internationally renowned Aachen-based dressage trainer Ton de Ridder is coaching four riders at the World Championships – from Finland, Spain, and Portugal.

For years, Dutchman Ton de Ridder has been recognized worldwide as a highly respected dressage trainer. In the 1990s, work first brought him to Aachen, and later love kept him there. He trained Alexandra Simons and guided her all the way to the top level. The Aachen rider won, among other achievements, European Championship gold in 1999 on Chacomo as well as the “Grand Dressage Prize of Aachen,” and went on to become Olympic team champion in 2000. She is also married to Antonie – as Ton de Ridder is properly called.

For many years, de Ridder has trained dressage riders from various countries. Starting in 2010, for example, he worked for a long time with Spain’s Beatriz Ferrer-Salat, who won bronze in the freestyle at the 2015 European Championships in Aachen. De Ridder also trained Japan’s Hiroshi Hoketsu for many years; at the 2008 Olympic Games in Hong Kong, Hoketsu competed at the age of 67 as the oldest participant and delivered an impressive performance. De Ridder’s two daughters, Jill Hollweg-de Ridder and Julia de Ridder, also took up dressage and won multiple European youth championship gold medals.

At the FEI World Championships Aachen 2026, the Aachen-based trainer has practically a whole team competing: four riders—one each from Finland and Spain, and two from Portugal. “These are four riders who get along very well with one another,” says de Ridder with pleasure. “There is a great atmosphere between them; no one is jealous of anyone else. That makes my job much easier.” He defines that job as follows: “I don’t teach lessons – they are all experienced riders. I give pointers and try to optimize the riding further.”

Portuguese rider Vasco Godinho and Marques dos Cedros got things underway on Tuesday morning. For the 36-year-old, it was a first appearance in Aachen. “It is also the first year my horse is competing at this level, and here he did his first truly major class. But he is a wonderful horse, a horse for the future,” said Godinho, pleased with his performance on the ten-year-old Lusitano, a Portuguese baroque breed. It was not his first championship, however: he had already competed at the 2018 World Equestrian Games in Tryon and at the 2017 European Championships in Gothenburg.



Aachen-based dressage trainer Ton de Ridder (centre) with his riders José Antonio Garcia Mena (from left), Henri Ruoste, Vasco Godinho (from right), and Maria Caetano.

Photo: Dagmar Meyer-Roeger

“That was a fault-free test; only the extended trot and two transitions from piaffe to passage could have been even better,” analysed his coach, who was nonetheless satisfied. “All in all, it was good—the two of them presented a lovely picture.” The judges awarded 68.680 percent.

Spain’s José Antonio Garcia Mena also competed on a Lusitano. For the Spaniard, these were already his third World Championships after 2010 and 2014, and he has also competed at two European Championships, including Aachen 2015, where he finished fourth with the Spanish team. “Riding into the main stadium here in Aachen is a very special experience,” said the 45-year-old, who produced a good test on his 15-year-old Gladidor Do Lis and received 71.134 percent.

“I’ve already competed at the CHIO eight times – and my horse is in Aachen for the third time,” said Maria Caetano with a laugh before the question had even been fully asked. Her 14-year-old Hit Plus is a Portuguese-bred sport horse by the Dutch sire Bretton Woods. The 39-year-old Portuguese rider is highly experienced at championships: she represented her country at the World Equestrian Games in 2014 and 2018 and has taken part

in seven European Championships. She also qualified for the Olympic Games in 2021 and 2024. “But this World Championship feels completely different from the CHIO. The CHIO is already very special, but a World Championship is on another level,” Caetano emphasized, having already competed in Aachen at the 2015 European Championships. “That was already fantastic – this World Championship goes one better.”

Her goal was the Special on Friday, for which only the best 30 riders from the Grand Prix qualify. “If Hit Plus goes the way he did recently and also gets that many points, it could be possible,” said the 39-year-old, who had recently impressed at the show in Lier, Belgium, where she finished second in the Grand Prix Special. Her solid Grand Prix earned 71.025 percent, which was just enough to qualify her for Friday’s Special among the top 30 riders.

Completing the quartet is Henri Ruoste. The 44-year-old Finn is also an experienced championship rider, having represented his country at the Olympic Games in 2021 and 2024 and already competed at three European Championships. A World Championship, however, is a first for the likeable rider. On paper, he is

the strongest of the four, but the Finn quickly waves that away: “Tiffanys Diamond has only done one show since the 2025 European Championships in Crozet. I only brought her out again in July in Hagen. She went well, but she still needs to get back into rhythm and gain more routine.” The 14-year-old mare had minor hoof issues over the winter, and her rider gave her a long break from competition.

At the Aachen Dressage Days in early May, Ruoste – who runs an equestrian facility in Menden together with his German wife – won the Grand Prix Special with Delaurentis and briefly considered riding him at the World Championships. “But he still needs time; Aachen comes too early for him,” said Ruoste. A year and a half ago, de Ridder had advised him to buy Delaurentis himself after the horse had come into the stable as a sales horse. “Fortunately, I followed my trainer’s advice.” De Ridder laughs: “Henri is such a good rider, he doesn’t need a trainer. I would say we exchange ideas.” And that exchange has been working successfully for a year and a half. In the Grand Prix, the Finn impressed with 71.817 percent and qualified for Friday’s Special among the top 30 riders. (rau)

The World Championships Open Their Gates to Everyone

Admission is free on Allianz Park Day on August 17 – a chance to experience the Soers in the middle of the World Championships away from top-level sport.



Philip Erbers

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday, August 17, Allianz Park will open its gates. In addition to shopping, strolling, and enjoying food in the Championships Village, there will be a showcase in Stadium 2 from 12 noon to 3 p.m. featuring various horse breeds and disciplines. The highlight will be an attempt at a world record with more than 130 horses. In advance, we spoke with Philip Erbers, member of the ALRV board and responsible for infrastructure on the showgrounds, about Allianz Park Day.

What is the idea behind Allianz Park Day?

Philipp Erbers: This “open day” is part of our tradition and something we see as a matter of course. We want to show—and live by the principle—



Admission is free on Allianz Park Day on Monday.

Photos: Andreas Steindl

that everyone is always welcome here. These FEI World Championships belong to all of us and thrive on the many visitors. If we have helped bring equestrian sport or enthusiasm for this event closer to someone, then we have done everything right.

What can visitors expect on the grounds?

Erbers: Aachen’s Soers invites everyone who wants to experience this special World Championship atmosphere live. It’s not only equestrian sports enthusiasts who will get their money’s worth here. The range on offer at the various stands with more than 200 exhibitors in the Championships Village is very extensive.

What should visitors definitely not miss?

Erbers: I’m very excited to see how our world record attempt will go. In Stadium 2, the plan is for the largest Haflinger and Edelbluthaflinger quadrille with more than 130 horses. Otherwise, the family rally is very exciting and diverse. With a stamp card, visitors can explore the

different locations around the showgrounds. There is not only a lot to experience and discover in a playful way, but also prizes to win, such as free tickets.

Why does Allianz Park Day take place on a Monday of all days?

Erbers: On the one hand, there are organizational reasons. For top-level sport and the medal decisions, Allianz Park Day is a “rest day.” This day also gives us time to make sure everything is prepared as well as possible. The other reason is that we want to give everyone the opportunity to come onto the grounds free of charge. In the middle of the tournament, it is of course an ideal time, because there is already a lot going on and a great deal to see. (twb)

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“My talent was my ambition”

Vaulter Nadine Ehning: from world champion to member of Aachen's organizing team

Nadia Ehning is constantly on the move around the showgrounds during the day at the World Championships – organizing, coordinating, answering interview questions. The three-time world and European champion in vaulting, then still competing as Nadia Zülöw, handles all kinds of matters. Behind Stadium 3 in Allianz Park, where the vaulters hold their competitions, she meets Nicolas Andreani, also a world champion and now national coach of the Belgian team. A warm greeting, a short conversation in French – très bien.

Ehning now works behind the scenes, preparing the ground so that the next generation in her sport can perform under excellent conditions. Since 2004, the wife of successful show jumper Marcus Ehning has been part of Aachen's vaulting organizing team. The group supports the Aachen-Lauersberger Rennverein in staging the competitions. Back in 2005, vaulting was part of the CHIO for the first time – a test run for the 2006 World Equestrian Games in Aachen's Soers district.

“At the time, there were six of us,” Ehning recalls of the early days. ALRV managing director Frank Kemperman had already recruited her at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez, Spain. He told her that if she ever stopped competing, he would need her on his team for this discipline in Aachen. Of the original team, only Patrick Looser is still involved today.

The transition from elite sport into a behind-the-scenes role happened “gradually,” says the 48-year-old, who is very grateful she was able to stay connected to her sport in this way. “And then on a stage like Aachen.” For her, those were the best possible conditions to continue developing the sport she loves.

Ehning's duties on the organizing team are varied. Who needs to be where and when? Are all the volunteers assigned? Have procedures changed? Does a plan need to be adjusted? Are there last-minute withdrawals? Then there are press appointments and talks with team members from the various nations. Looking after VIP guests and preparing the award ceremonies are also part of her responsibilities. And the closing party after the final competition and medal presentation must also be planned.



“Aachen is the temple of equestrian sport”: Nadia Ehning, world champion in vaulting, plays a key role in making sure everything runs smoothly in this discipline during the World Championships.

Photo: Dagmar Meyer-Roeger

Vaulting is a discipline that works differently from dressage or show jumping. The athletes need different training and warm-up conditions. The interaction between horse, athlete, and lunge creates special requirements.

Ehning knows that from personal experience. Between 1998 and 2003, she was one of vaulting's top athletes, winning three World Championship and three European Championship gold medals in the women's individual competition. “Today I can appreciate my achievements more,” she says. Back then, she took many things for granted.

“My talent was my ambition,” says Ehning. By nature, she was not especially flexible. But she liked training – and trained a lot. When the others had finished their session, she would often keep going for another hour. If training started

at 2 p.m., she was already there at 1 p.m. and getting started. She says she quite literally worked for her flexibility. Her ambition drove her on. She was annoyed that the exercises came more easily to the other athletes than to her.

Vaulting has changed over the last 20 years. Nadia Ehning believes it has developed from a children's sport into a true high-performance discipline: “Anyone watching the athletes at a World Championship sees acrobatics at the highest level – handstands on the horse, flick-flacks, and complex exercises while the horse is moving beneath them.”

According to the world champion, one major change has been in how the horse's performance is judged. “The horse is increasingly in focus as an athlete in its own right,” says Ehning. Many horses that did not compete in jumping or dressage found their way into vault-

ing “via a second educational path,” as she puts it.

That vaulting is also good training for riders in other disciplines is shown by the example of a rider from Qatar. According to Ehning, he could ride well but was not yet physically prepared in the best possible way. Her husband Marcus recommended vaulting training to him. The Qatari accepted, and according to Nadia Ehning became “more secure, fitter, and more balanced” in the saddle.

For Nadia Ehning, horses remain central – along with her four children, aged between 10 and 17. The world champion trains vaulting horses and supports children in equestrian sport.

But these days, everything revolves around the World Championships and Aachen. The atmosphere at the vaulting competitions is often loud – so loud, in fact, that in the early years, when the vaulters still held their competitions in the Albert Vahle Hall, the dressage schedule in the neighbouring stadium had to be adjusted so riders would not be overly disturbed by the noise. “We were always far too loud,” Nadia Ehning, who still finds it special every time she comes to Aachen. “It always feels just like the World Championships motto says: Welcome home.” Aachen, she says, is “the temple of equestrian sport.”

At major championships like this one, many old acquaintances meet again. Ehning's friendship with Moni Bischofberger, which began in 1992 with an exchange of addresses, still exists today. The letters have since been replaced by WhatsApp messages and personal visits. Other international contacts have also endured – for example with Sweden's Johnny Fisbaek: “He is my best friend.” And some people Ehning once knew as athletes are now standing ringside as coaches, lungers, or team officials. Moni Winkler-Bischofberger, as she is known today, for instance, is lunging for the Swiss competitors.

Everyone who is in Aachen's Soers this week and feels devoted to vaulting is looking forward to the competitions. “Vaulting has repeatedly been able to climb one step higher on the equestrian Olympus thanks to Aachen,” says Ehning. She says with certainty: “The stadium will once again become a cauldron.” (ebr)

Trendy World Championship fashion and selfie spots

From the official collection to start lists: useful information for visitors to Allianz Park.

It's here: the new collection

The brand-new FEI World Championships Collection has arrived and is waiting to be discovered by you! Browse the fan shops on the showgrounds and be inspired by trendy shirts, stylish caps, and cool accessories – for women, men, and children. Stop by and find your new favourite piece!

QR code & start lists

Start lists and results are available digitally, either in the free FEI World Championships Aachen app, which you should ideally install on your mobile phone before your visit, or via a QR code that you can scan on site. Not distributing printed copies is an important step toward greater sustainability. The free online lists also include live scoring: results are

updated automatically in digital form, so the list is always up to date.

Ticket info

The line-up: absolute world class. The atmosphere: exceptional. The supporting program: spectacular. And you can be there live! Tickets are still available for some competitions and can be booked in the online ticket shop at tickets.aachen2026.com.

Fully informed: the FEI World Championships Aachen app

Whether start lists or results – all information can always be found in its latest form. Fans can follow the competitions even more closely and, thanks to personalized push notifications in their favourite disciplines, stay perfectly always informed. In addition, news, interviews, and the

event newspaper are available free of charge.

Anyone who doesn't want to spend time searching for the right food stand or shop in the Championships Village can simply enter their desired location in the app and quickly find the stand with ease. Getting around the grounds also becomes much easier for visitors. During the DHL Prize, the cross-country test of the FEI Eventing World Championship, and the Schwartz Group Prize, the popular marathon of the FEI Driving World Championship Four-in-Hand, the app shows interactive course maps with videos and photos of the individual obstacles—the perfect overview with exciting information. The chatbot integrated into the app answers questions about the event quickly and easily – it couldn't



The selfie spot behind the Mercedes-Benz grandstand.
Photo: Julie Vandegaar

make visiting the championships any simpler.

Selfie spots

This year, Allianz Park is once again turning into a real hotspot for photography fans! Spectacular selfie spots are spread across the grounds, waiting to be discovered. The creations of Aachen artist Paul Sous, better known as Käpten Nobbi, invite you to capture your very own World Championship moment. Share your best moments on Instagram, tag @aachen2026_official, and use the hashtag #WelcomeHome. We're looking forward to seeing your creative snapshots! (red)

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**Vielseitigkeit –
ein Wert der
uns verbindet.**

United by one goal: to come back and ride in Aachen again

At the World Championships, Aachen-based dressage trainer Renate Dahmen is coaching a lively quartet of female riders from Cyprus, Turkey, and Thailand.

This is what you call pure girl power. Dahmen and her four riders are beaming as brightly as the sun. The Aachen dressage trainer is coaching four women who have all qualified for the FEI World Championships in Aachen. What makes it particularly interesting is that they come from nations that are either not represented at all or only rarely represented in dressage at the Aachen CHIO. Rotem Jale Ibrahimzadeh is competing for Turkey, Suphakamol Vuntanadit and Suphajit Vuntanadit for Thailand, and Gabriele H.-Kiefer for Cyprus.

The Aachen native has known “her” riders for a long time. Dahmen, who herself has competed successfully at advanced level and has also ridden at CHIO Aachen, says of H.-Kiefer: “Oh, it must be 30 years by now — I already knew her father.” H.-Kiefer herself reflects: “I’ve been riding with Renate for 15 years and more.” On the national level, she even rides for the Aachen dressage club based at the Dahmen family’s facility in Vetschau. Internationally, however, the 59-year-old represents Cyprus.

“I commute between Berlin and Cyprus — and of course Aachen, where my horse Cyrus Ophelia is stabled. Flying is no problem nowadays,” says the personable dressage rider, who is still a genuine amateur. “I really enjoy training with Renate, and my horse stays with her in Aachen when I’m away.” In Templin, Brandenburg, the Cyprus-based rider and her husband run the Petznick Stud, and many of their homebred young horses end up with the Dahmen family — Renate, her husband Franz-Josef, and daughter Jana Kun — all of whom either compete or have competed at advanced level and train horses.

For H.-Kiefer, this is her first appearance at a World Championship, though she has already gained championship experience at two European Championships. She is also the only rider in the quartet who has already experienced CHIO Aachen from the saddle — in 2025.

“CHIO is wonderful, but being able to ride at a World Championship here in Aachen is something very special. The organization is fantastic, for horses and riders alike,” says the

dressage rider. With her 16-year-old mare Cyrus Ophelia, with whom she has been training at Dahmen’s stable for six years, she scored 63.913 percent in the Grand Prix. “Unfortunately, both walk pirouettes didn’t go so well, and that cost us a lot of points,” she regrets. Dahmen adds: “Apart from the small mistakes in the walk work, it was a good test, without any major mistakes.” The trainer was pleased with the performance.

Jale Ibrahimzadeh found her way to the Dahmen stable as a pony rider. Training there earned her a place at the Pony European Championships.

“I am the first Turkish rider ever to compete at a dressage championship — in ponies, at the 2025 European Championships, and now here at the World Championships,” says the now 30-year-old with justified pride. It is also her first start in Aachen, though she is not based very far from the old imperial city. Ibrahimzadeh trains with French-Spanish dressage rider Morgan Barbançon Mestre, who lives and rides in Belgium — in Meeuwen-Gruitrode, together with her partner, Belgian show jumper Nicola Philippaerts.

”

I’ve already been to Aachen as a spectator. It’s a very special event — you can really feel the vibe here.

Rotem Jale Ibrahimzadeh

“I had already been to Aachen as a spectator. It’s a very special show — you can really feel the vibe here,” says the Turkish rider enthusiastically. She had actually been pleased with her test on Double Dutch, an 18-year-old Dutch horse, but she was eliminated after the class during the bit check.

“Double Dutch bit his tongue while cooling out, and there was



Girl power: Aachen dressage trainer Renate Dahmen (centre) with Rotem Jale Ibrahimzadeh (from left), Gabriele H.-Kiefer, Suphajit Vuntanadit (from right), and Suphakamol Vuntanadit.

Photo: Michael von Fisenne

a very tiny spot that wasn’t even bleeding,” the 30-year-old explains. “The horse is fine. But those are the rules, and I respect them.” Her test had been marked at 63 percent, with only one mistake in the piaffe. “Rotem often comes by to train with us, ever since we played a key role in helping her qualify for the Pony World Championships as a teenager,” says Renate Dahmen.

“And Pam and Patty simply asked us whether they could come train with us as well. They first came to us as juniors.”

Pam and Patty are actually named Suphakamol and Suphajit Vuntanadit. The two Thai riders, aged 29 and 25, now also live and train in Belgium and own their own stable near Antwerp.

Pam, the older sister, was unlucky in the Grand Prix. Her 18-year-old Dutch horse misstepped, then protected himself on the diagonal, and she was rung out in accordance with the rules.

“That was a real shame — she was going well up to that point. We’ll have to see what Dreamboat has. He seemed completely fine and had passed the vet check without any issues,” said Renate Dahmen, regretting that Suphakamol Vuntana-

dit was unable to complete her first World Championship appearance.

“Above all, I wanted to have fun in Aachen,” said Suphakamol Vuntanadit — though some of that was lost after the Grand Prix. Overall, however, the 29-year-old is proud that she was able to ride at her first World Championship and in Aachen for the first time — and to do so together on the team with her younger sister. She has been riding Dreamboat for five years and worked her way up with him to Grand Prix level.

Patty, the younger of the two sisters, received 65.078 percent for her test on the 19-year-old Hanoverian Wall Street and was delighted.

“It was a very solid test; I only had a small mistake in the half-passes,” beamed Suphajit Vuntanadit. She too has been riding Wall Street for five years, though only at Grand Prix level for “two or three years.”

“We’ve been to CHIO several times as spectators, but the atmosphere at the World Championships is different again.”

And even though the World Championships are already over for the quartet after the Grand Prix, all four of them want one thing above all else: to come back and ride in Aachen again. (rau)

The stamp-wall is unforgettable

At the 2006 World Equestrian Games, Küchengirl, ridden by Marcus Ehning, refused at the obstacle in the second round of the Nations Cup. Even so, the German show jumping team still won bronze.

The stamp-wall has achieved a certain fame in the equestrian world. Marcus Ehning shakes his head and laughs: "Abroad, nobody talks about it anymore. Only you in Germany keep bringing up this wall, even after 20 years." No wonder – it was here that the dreams of many German fans of an individual medal for Ehning were shattered. It was exactly 20 years ago at the World Equestrian Games in Aachen when the usually so reliable mare Küchengirl refused at the wall, and an entire stadium let out a groan.

For Ehning, however, the wall was not the decisive reason why the hoped-for individual medal never materialized. The reasons lay elsewhere. After all, he still secured the bronze medal with the German team, which at the time also included Ludger Beerbaum, Christian Ahlmann, and Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum, finishing be-



A scene that remains unforgettable: in 2006, Marcus Ehning and Küchengirl were unable to take off in front of the wall.

Photo:IMAGO / Chai v.d. Laage

hind the Netherlands and the United States. "And I wasn't entirely the drop score — my first round with one rail down contributed to the bronze." It had been close: only 0.01 points separated the Germans from the

fourth-placed Ukrainians. The year 2006 had been a successful one for Marcus Ehning. He was world number one, had won the World Cup Final, and had also claimed the Grand Prix titles in Aachen and La Baule. The now 52-year-old from Borken arrived at the World Equestrian Games as a favourite for the title.

"In Aachen, something got the better of me. I wanted too much, I was over motivated," admits the elegant rider, reflecting on his mistakes. "Even in the speed class, I was far too fast. And in the second round of the Nations Cup, the mare's adrenaline level was certainly too high," Ehning said. "I had already had a mistake before that, and so the mare cantered more cautiously to the wall – and then the take-off simply didn't come together."

But Ehning says he learned from it. "I drew my lessons from that. I found a trainer in Henk Nooren and

changed quite a few things." The Dutchman is still his main point of contact whenever he has problems. The same applies to Ludger Beerbaum. "I'm relatively close with him, but I also exchange ideas with the other colleagues."

Ehning already got a taste of the stadium atmosphere at Tuesday's opening ceremony; he will not arrive with his current top horse Coolio until the weekend. Because 20 years after those World Equestrian Games, the 51-year-old is once again a member of the German show jumping team, alongside Richard Vogel, Sophie Hinners, and Daniel Deußner. "We're trying to give our best," Ehning says, focused rather than over motivated. "Coolio is in good shape." And another medal is certainly possible. "The German team definitely has a good chance — but as always, everything has to come together."

(rau)

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PROGRAMME AUGUST 14 – 18

Friday, 14 August

**MAIN STADIUM****10:50 – 17:15 CEST****Dressage: MEGGLE-Prize**★ Grand Prix Spécial
Individual Final**STADIUM 2 – ALLIANZ PARK****09:30 – 17:00 CEST****Eventing: DHL-Prize**

Dressage Team & Individual

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****08:00 – 12:15 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

Individual Female Technical Test

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****17:00 – 18:40 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

Individual Male Technical Test

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****19:00 – 20:25 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

Pas de Deux Free Test

Saturday, 15 August

**MAIN STADIUM****19:00 – 23:15 CEST****Dressage: Lindt-Prize**★ Grand Prix Freestyle
Individual Final**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****08:00 – 12:40 CEST****VAULTING: Prize of Sparkasse**

★ Individual Female Free Test

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****13:15 – 15:20 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

★ Individual Male Free Test

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****15:45 – 18:25 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

★ Squad Free Test

**GELÄNDESTRECKE SOERS****09:15 – 15:55 CEST****Eventing: DHL-Prize**

Cross-Country Team & Individual

Sunday, 16 August

**MAIN STADIUM****13:00 – 17:20 CEST****Eventing: DHL-Prize**

★ Jumping Team & Individual

**STADIUM 2 – ALLIANZ PARK****09:30 – 11:00 CEST****Horse Inspection****STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****09:30 – 11:20 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**

★ Final Pas de Deux Free Test

**STADIUM 3 – ALLIANZ PARK****12:00 – 15:15 CEST****Vaulting: Prize of Sparkasse**★ Official Team Competition
Free Test

Monday, 17 August

**MAIN STADIUM****11:00 – 16:00 CEST****Side Events: Allianz Park Day**Open day with show programme –
Free entrance**MAIN STADIUM****09:00 – 16:15 CEST****Jumping: Training session**

open to the public and moderated

Tuesday, 18 August

★ Medal decision

You can read the program for
August 19 and 20 in the next issue.

HENRY CAVILL



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