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Canada's Representatives in the Parade of Nations

PHOTO GALLERY



Mares and foals cavorting in the arena before an appreciative audience - [click to enlarge](#). (photo credit Eclipse Communications)



500 local children wearing and carrying umbrellas in the rainbow colours of the FEI WEG logo formed two human versions at either end of the stadium - [click to enlarge](#). (photo credit jwequine.com)



Opening Ceremonies Special Report

Sunday, August 20th, 2006

Special Report – The Opening Ceremonies

What an experience that was! The stands in the main stadium were packed with fans from around the world as the carefully choreographed Opening Ceremonies began.

Before the official beginning, the audience was encouraged to practice the universally recognized sign of support –the wave. Regardless of nationality, everyone got into the spirit of the moment as the wave cascaded around the four sides of the arena.

A countdown on the videotron screen let the audience know when things would begin. As the musical overture (played by a live orchestra) began a herd of 32 mares and foals were turned loose to cavort around the huge show ring.

From then on the action never stopped as one act after another moved into and out of the arena. The announcer told us that the motto for the Games revolved around a Fascination of the Colours – seven colours for seven disciplines.

500 children carrying umbrellas in the seven colours flooded into the arena (appropriate in the drizzle that continued off and on throughout the afternoon). They formed two horse-head logos – one at either end of the dressage arena in the center of the show ring.

Next was a tribute to the previous World Equestrian Games, followed by a tribute to Germany's long history with the horse.

Perhaps one of the most amazing demonstrations was the Quadrille performed by 64 riders (in 4 teams of 16) plus 4 leaders – all riding stallions representing the major breeding districts on Germany. The phenomenal choreography and precision of the movements was recognized and appreciated by the knowledgeable spectators who clapped in time to the music and cheered enthusiastically at the end of the 15 minute routine. Imagine a 64-horse pinwheel!

68 stallions participating in an impressive display of precision riding - [click to enlarge](#). (photo credit Eclipse Communications)



Fountain - [click to enlarge](#).

Demonstrations of all seven disciplines took place. Vaulters performed as 4-in-hand ponies and carriages wove around them. Show jumpers and dressage riders vied with reining demonstrations for spectator attention while eventers and endurance riders galloped around the perimeter. Ceci said it was a "seven ring circus." The good kind.

Things calmed down for the parade of nations and the official opening speeches. Canada's contingent was led by flag bearer Hannah Marland, a member of the Vaulting Team. Mike Gallagher, Canada's Chef de Mission, told us that, in typical Canadian style, the flag bearer was chosen democratically. Each Team submitted one name as a potential flag bearer and then a draw was held to make the decision.

The speeches were short but heartfelt. HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, President of the FEI, explained that the FEI World Equestrian Games are unique in that seven disciplines are represented. She told the athletes that "you have been chosen to represent your nation in this theatre of dreams. You have strived to achieve the pinnacle of your sport and ...now is your time to strive for greatness...The experiences you gain here will last for a lifetime." After wishing everyone good luck she officially declared the fifth FEI World Equestrian Games, Aachen 2006, open.

The Ceremonies ended as the 15m high fountain exploded and 14,000 balloons (in the 7 representative colours) were released as the crowd rose to its feet for the national anthem of Germany.

It was a spectacular presentation evoking strong emotions in everyone in the stadium.