

Daily Diary – Thursday, August 31st

Early Morning

Canada's Reining Team members have arrived. They spent a week in Belgium practicing and giving their horses a chance to acclimatize and the horses arrived on the show grounds yesterday. We're staying in the same hotel in Eschweiler, a small town near Aachen, and the group was up early this morning to head over to the grounds for the pre-veterinary inspection jog.

Asked if there were any concerns about doing the soundness jog on gravel, as opposed to the sand the horses are used to working on, they all said they didn't anticipate any problems.

Once the jog is finished, the Team plans to spend the rest of the day training and making sure the horses are ready to get in the ring. The group has a very positive attitude and are going into competition with winning on their minds.

They said they'd been watching some of the show jumping and were utterly amazed that Eric Lamaze was able to jump the final obstacle in the speed class cleanly. Lots of cross-discipline respect here!

Later in the Day

All of the Canadian Reining horses passed the 'jog' with no problems. They had some practice time in the Stadium where the competitions will be held and said they were very happy with the sand footing that was hauled in by the tandem truck load. They agreed that the reason the footing is excellent is because they (the Organizing Committee) hired the best, Bob Kiser, from Texas. Kiser Arena Specialists are responsible for footing control at some of the largest reining shows in the world.

All four members of the Reining Team were interviewed by CBC's Karin Larsen for CBC Country Canada. Luke Gagnon seemed shy and nervous in his national television debut.

And in the Evening

Round two of the Grand Prix got under way at 6:30 p.m. local time. A total of 84 horses were scheduled to tackle the 13-jump course. As with yesterday's course, the last jump on the course is a vertical and is the highest jump in the field at 164 cm. Once again, Course Designer Frank Rothenberger included a triple combination jump (8A-B-C: Oxer – Vertical – Oxer, set at 3 different heights) just after the horses pass the in-gate.

Because of the possibility of reflections from the stadium lights in the water in both Liverpools (jumps with water under them) and in the big water jump, these have been eliminated from the course. Those riding early in the line-up of 84 horses probably wouldn't be affected; but those riding after dark certainly would, so the decision was made to eliminate water from the course to keep everything fair and equal for all riders.

When Eric Lamaze and Hickstead entered the ring all eyes were upon them based on their previous stellar rounds. Problems began early in the course and the crowd groaned in sympathy. "From (Jump) 2 to (Jump) 3, he cross-cantered," said Lamaze. Hickstead incurred four faults at Jump #7 (the 'skinny'), as well as at two elements of the triple combination, resulting in a total of 12 jumping faults and a significant drop in ranking, from second to 27th.

"He gave such a great effort," Eric said after the round. "It was a bit of bad luck today. He didn't feel great, he wasn't himself." Lamaze suspected that his horse was body sore.

Canadian Chef d'Équipe for Jumping Terrence (Torchy) Millar said, "That was disappointing; he basically rode well, but he left a stride out to the skinny (Fence #7)."

Former World Champion, Canada's Gail Greenough, said, "I'm very sad for Eric – very, very sad. He'd be perfect for a Final Four." Gail knows what she was talking about. It was in the final four where her ability to adapt to

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different horses helped her win the championship twenty years ago, a quality she recognizes in Eric. Canadian hopes for a show jumping title were dashed as only the top 25 will continue in the next round of competition.

Tid Bits

Last evening the Organizing Committee for the Games hosted a party for the hundreds of media representatives from around the world on-site, covering the Games. There was lots of food (including, of course, pork) but there were alternatives including sea food, lamb and lots of delicious salads, vegetables and tasty desserts. Did we mention the killer chocolate mousse that's so popular here – with good reason?

They added a live band for our entertainment. It struck us funny that, between sets, the band leader would address the audience in German and then, when they broke into song (focusing on 60s-70s rock-n-roll) they would sing the lyrics in perfect, unaccented, English.

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