

ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP™ JUMPING – THE SWISS CONNECTION...



The 2009/2010 Rolex FEI World Cup™ Jumping series has a distinctly Swiss flavour to it. Devised by Swiss journalist Max Amman, run under the rules of the Lausanne-based Fédération Equestre Internationale and sponsored by the world's leading watchmaking company, Rolex, which is headquartered in Geneva where this season's final will take place, the popular series is celebrating its 32nd season.

Like most great ideas it has stood the test of time and become something of an institution. The sport of indoor show jumping has always had appeal, but the plan to create a super-tournament that would encourage riders from all around the world to fight for a qualifying spot at a grand final proved inspirational right from the start.

DEVELOPED AND EXPANDED

When the first season came to a close at the Scandinavium Arena in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1979 a total of 27 riders from nine countries competed for the title, but as this most popular of sports has developed and expanded over the intervening years the original two leagues have grown to 14 and now reach the four corners of the earth. There are 13 events in the Arab and North America West leagues, 15 in North America East, eight in South Central Europe, New Zealand and Japan, 11 in Australia, four in South East Asia, seven in South America, five in South Africa, three both in the Central Asian and Caucasian leagues and nine in North Central Europe. However it is the Western European League that has provided the majority of the champions including the present incumbent, Germany's Meredith



Michaels-Beerbaum. Once again this season the Western European circuit begins in Oslo in Norway and takes in 13 qualifying events before the final which will be staged at the Palexpo Arena in Geneva from 14-18 April 2010.

SECRET OF SUCCESS

The secret of the success of the Rolex FEI World Cup™ Jumping series lies in its simplicity. World-class course design, the very best horses and riders, the most prestigious indoor venues and guaranteed entertainment for both the discerning equestrian audience and the wider public alike. You don't have to be an aficionado of the sport of show jumping to recognise the skill, courage, tenacity and flair of the equine stars and their human counterparts as they tackle a tough course of fences in the enclosed environs of an indoor stadium. Spectators all around the globe will once again be enthralled by the communication between human and horse as they strive to leave all those fences standing and gallop home in the fastest time to secure that all-important win.

In the early years of the series riders from North America featured prominently, with US riders taking the title on six occasions and Canadians registering three victories. In recent times however Germans have dominated, and this season Germany's Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum could be in line for a new record. The diminutive Californian-born title-holder is going for her third consecutive win and, having previously come out on top in 2005, she will be the

most successful competitor in the history of the series if she succeeds, because no-one else has ever taken this trophy four times.

HAT-TRICK

Brazil's Rodrigo Pessoa scored a hat-trick between 1998 and 2000 riding Baloubet du Rouet and Austria's Hugo Simon, who was the first man ever to hold the coveted trophy aloft in 1979, won twice more in 1996 and 1997. Double-victories have been recorded by legendary partnerships like Canada's Ian Millar and Big Ben and Britain's John Whitaker and Milton but if Meredith, one of only four women to claim this ultimate prize, can do it again then she will establish a whole new standard.

It is her unique partnership with one of the greatest jumping horses of all time, the gelding Shutterfly, that has made her a formidable force. It seems that no fence is too high or too wide for this exceptional equine athlete who was in his sixteenth year when scooping the 2008/2009 title and that, together, they can raise the bar even higher for the rest of the best this season.

The Rolex brand is synonymous with lasting, quality performance, as are the partnership between Meredith and Shutterfly and the Rolex FEI World Cup™ Jumping series. It seems infinitely appropriate therefore that, after the 116 qualifying legs around the globe, the 2009/2010 champion will be crowned in the Swiss city which is home to the masters of timing.