

Aussies beat the heat for victory

SAUMUR

By Nessie Lambert

CLAYTON Fredericks has once again written his name on the Saumur CCI*** roll of honour. It turned out to be an Aussie one-two here in the beautiful Loire Valley with Bill Levett snapping at the heels of the victor who had led throughout the competition to land the spoils aboard Bendigo III. Clayton's victory was particularly sweet given that it was the first time his owners, Peta and Edwin McAuley, had seen their Holsteiner compete.

"They had flown in from Hong Kong so I felt a bit of pressure as I had been building this horse's reputation up to them," said a relieved Clayton whose flashy bay gelding swept into the lead after the dressage on a score of 41.4.

"He moves well and is very good looking but he likes to show off and doesn't always listen to me. That said, he was pretty sensible in the dressage. Without doubt I put this down to the heat which took the edge off him nicely," said Clayton.

The heat had less of an advantageous effect on Aurélien Kahn's mount Lord De Lignière, who nevertheless lay in second place following the



Bill Levett finishes second with One Two Many NJ, a horse he has produced from a four-year-old

first phase, only trailing the leader

by a mere 2.6 marks.

"He could do better," said the Frenchman. "He was lacking sparkle and he still has some difficulties with his changes."

With only six marks separating the top 10 on Friday night there was all to play for on cross-country day, with Georgie Davies, Laura Collett and Zara Phillips sitting comfortably in fifth, sixth and eighth places.

Pierre Michelet's course proved as influential as always, with only three out of the 54

starters coming home inside the time. The first to do so was the popular young Frenchman Sidney Dufresne, a performance which moved him up from 26th place to ninth.

Piggy French and DHI Topper W looked impressive as the rider took her customary short routes to rise up into third.

"It's his first three-star and he felt so comfortable," said Piggy. "Those fences needed attacking and he rose to the challenge."

On the up

Bill Levett climbed into second place overnight after Aurélien Kahn added a handful of time penalties which dropped him down to fifth.

"He responded beautifully but just lacked a little acceleration towards the end," said Bill of his ride One Two Many NJ.

"I've had him since he was four years old and I've done everything with him so this is even more special."

Fence 10, a step up to an angled brush, snared a few prisoners, including Laurence Hunt with On Q For Gold



Clayton Fredericks, the happy CCI* winner with Bendigo III**

and Matt Ryan with Bonza Moorabinda. But it was the heat that proved to be the ultimate challenge with the cross-country becoming a tough endurance test as the sand rode dry and deep. The result was that some horses finished quite tired although they recovered quickly.

Less than one pole separated the top five on Saturday night,

with the Aussies setting the standard.

"The competition will be tight to the end but we are still friends – at least until tomorrow," joked Clayton.

Clear rounds proved rare and

poles expensive. Zara Phillips dropped from fourth to fifth when High Kingdom rubbed two. Georgie Davies rose into sixth aboard Orlando and Andrew Nicholson was fourth with Qwanza after faultless rounds.

Piggy French rolled an early pole which still left her in third place but it gave the Aussie pair a cushion. They didn't need it, however, as neither horse dislodged a rail.

"As it was quite hot I didn't want to do too long a warm up so I tried to keep him fresh," said the winner. "I was pleased that I managed to stay focused from the first fence to the last."

Nicolas Touzaint led the CIC** from start to finish aboard Hildago De L'île, while Mark Todd held on to second place with NZB Campino despite lowering a pole in the show jumping.

"Second is always better than third," smiled Mark "Campino really grew up here. He's big and this is a fairly twisty course so it wasn't easy for him. It's funny standing on the podium with Nicholas – it's the young rider and the old horse in front of the

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Romania and Bulgaria battle for gold

BALKAN CHAMPIONSHIPS



BULGARIA played host to the Balkan Championships last month, where Romania's Milashkon Bogdan and his 10-year-old Westphalian mare Lady Kera snatched individual gold from the host nation's Iliyan Iskarov (Karichtat). Another Bulgarian gave the home crowd plenty to cheer about, Veselin Petrov claiming the bronze despite a stop on cross-country day with Adler. He completed in front of his teammate Svetlin Ivanov, the only other finisher, thus guaranteeing this squad team gold.

Eight horses contested this competition held on the outskirts of Shumen. Romania's Viorel Bubau and his mare Arctic led the eventual winners following the dressage but were eliminated during the influential cross-country phase which led to the

demise of half the field and left Milashkon at the head of affairs with a cushion of more than 10 points. He did use up almost all this advantage when leaving two fences on the floor but a total of 12 penalties from Iliyan Iskarov had given him further breathing space.

The contest, which drew in big crowds and attracted great media interest, was attended by Svilen Nelkov, the Bulgarian Minister for Sport.

This championship has been held 13 times between the inaugural event in 1968 and 2005. Bulgaria has by far the best record having clinched team gold seven times.