

Vaulting European Champs, Le Mans France from the 15th to 21st August 2011



Vaulting became an FEI discipline in 1983 and saw its first FEI European Championship organised just one year later, in the town of Ebreichsdorf in Austria.

This 15th edition of the Championship, which also included the European Juniors competition, returned to France for the 4th time this year, but for the first time in the world to the renowned venue of Le Mans, famous for its 24 hour race.

20 Nations participated: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mauritius, Nederland, Norway, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and United States of America.

16 Senior Individual Male Vaulters 34 Senior Individual Female Vaulters
25 Junior Individual Male Vaulters 40 Junior Individual Female Vaulters
8 Senior Teams of 7 Vaulters 10 Junior Teams of 7 Vaulters
12 Pas de Deux

South Africa was very proud to send 11 athletes:

2 senior males – Bongani Mvumvu, Jasyn Gertenbach
2 junior males – Damien Pretorius, Dylan Jones
3 senior females – Candice Elston, Montana Wright Zahne Pienaar
3 junior females – Alexa Stais, Chelsey Gertenbach, Julia Pitchford
1 junior female reserve, Anacy Tainton



Julia Pitchford



Candice Elston



Damien Pretorius



Alexa Stais



Dylan Jones



Montana Wright



Chelsey Gertenbach



Bongani Mvumvu



Zahne Pienaar



Alexa Stais



Zahne Pienaar



Julia Pitchford



Montana Wright



Candice Elston



Bongani Mvumvu



Chelsey Gertenbach



Damien Pretorius



Dylan Jones

Coaches Barbie Gertenbach and Steffi Waidmann prepared the vaulters well at their respective training camps in the Netherlands and Italy for three weeks prior to the competition, where the vaulters applied themselves diligently to physical and mental training and familiarizing themselves with the European horses and lungers to be used in the competition.

On Monday 15th August the SA contingent arrived together with their highly competent and organized Chef d'Equipe Paula Taylor and her assistant chef Megan Taylor. With great excitement all acquainted themselves with the show facilities and amenities.



Tuesday was a very busy day, all anxiously awaited the vetting of their horses, an important part of the Championship, as without the horse, the competition does not happen! With a sigh of relief and great celebrations, all SA Squad horses passed. After that all the vaulters had the opportunity to practice in the competition environment to accustom themselves and the horses to the hall, flags and going.

Wednesday 13h00 the junior female class marked the start of the European Championships with Julia, Alexa and Chelsey be in the first SA vaulters to compete in 9th 10th & 11th place of order. Sadly Pablo Picasso the horse on which Alexa was vaulting spooked as a result of a flashing cell on the electronic board on the side of the circle, this distressed the horse and he could not sustain an even canter making it very difficult for Alexa to perform her compulsory moves resulting in a poor compulsory score, making it virtually impossible for her to make the top 15 and go into the next round. This disheartened all the South Africans, as we knew Alexa had the potential and experience to have achieved a score in the top 15. Julia, in her first international event and the youngest vaulter competing in the champs achieved the best score for the SA females and Chelsey had a pleasing round and made SA proud.

Senior females, Candice, Montana and Zahne vaulted in their first international event competed against many experienced vaulters who afforded some stiff competition.

As the champs progressed our vaulters completed their compulsory and freestyle rounds, for some a few challenges were experienced, as vaulting is a sport where anything can happen good and bad, something Dylan sadly discovered.

Proudly Damien was placed in the top 15 after the first round in junior male class; this allowed him into the second round, what an amazing achievement as this too, was his first international competition.

Bongani once again qualified into the second round in senior male class and vaulted superbly considering he had sustained an ankle injury during the training period. Bongani achieved the best score in the SA males.

Unfortunately Jasyn too injured his ankle during training, was recovering well, but was not fit to compete in the competition.



A well prepared junior female reserve, Anacy, was thankfully not required to substitute.

A special thanks to parents, family and friends who travelled to France to make up an awesome SA support squad, their unflinching enthusiasm and encouragement was greatly appreciated.

An event of this calibre, as well as the preparation leading up to it allowed our athletes to gain insight into the level of competition internationally. They gleaned invaluable skills and experience which places them in a better position going forward. Yet again, the Proudly South African envoy represented their country faultlessly in all aspects and have returned home safely, enthused and motivated

to train and apply themselves to their chosen sport.



Final results of the European Championships held in Le Mans, France.

Class	Vaulter	Score	Place
Junior Female	Julia Pitchford	6.596	19 th
	Chelsey Gertenbach	6.269	27 th
	Alexa Stais	5.286	37 th
Senior Female	Montana Wright	6.194	26 th
	Zahne Pienaar	6.153	27 th
	Candice Elston	5.316	31 st
Junior Male	Damien Pretorius	6.267	15 th
	Dylan Jones	6.058	18 th
Senior Male	Bongani Mvumvu	6.665	15 th
	Jasyn Gertenbach	Did not compete	