

Philippa Johnson Wins in style CPEDI – Weert – Belgium

This weekend was the Weert CPEDI** which was held in conjunction with the FEI Youth Dressage Festival in Weert, Netherlands. What a weekend, a combination of a very bad cold, rain and millions of ponies!!! Although the competition only officially started on Thursday they opened the arenas on Wednesday giving the riders the chance to ride in the arenas. Philippa took advantage of this chance and since the venue, although over the border in Holland, is only 30 min from home it meant she could take Benedict ride him and then take him home. On Thursday they arrived, couldn't find a stable master, no vet to check the horse coming off the trailer, no-one to tell her where her stable was, generally a rocky start made worse by the fact that for once she didn't have her brilliant groom, aka Dad, with her!

Anyway things finally sorted, horse settled in, competition started on Friday. Although there were so many horses and ponies the Para Dressage in all had 24 horses starting, 13 of which were Grade IV horses, which included her two strongest competitor combinations, Ann Cathrin Lubbe with Zanko and Sabine Peeters with Papillon. Benedict did a fantastic test taking special note of the places they went wrong in Moorsele and won the class with 71,19%.

Poor Benedict was seriously not happy in the temporary stables (not used to slumming it!) and showed his displeasure by digging a huge hole in his stable and on Friday night it saved him as we had torrential rain the whole night and the start of Saturday morning. Philippa arrived on Saturday morning to feed him to find all the water that should have flooded his stable had collected in his hole saving the rest of his stable. They were very lucky with the weather, as it stayed dry for them. She was very grateful as by now her cold had gotten so bad she had lost her voice. One of the Belgium riders made a sign that she had to wear stating: I would like to talk with you, but for my voice it's better to shut my mouth!! I'm sorry.

Saturday the event was in the main arena, they had unfortunately not had a chance to ride here on Wednesday as they were still working on it and Murphy's Law it was surrounded by white tents, crowds, electronic score board and there were goats behind the judges box. Philippa came in and Benedict grew about 10 hands. Luckily the one thing her trainer Chris has been working hard on is teaching Philippa how to ride him when he is scared of something and it came into use. Sabine had put up a big score of 70% to chase. They managed to keep it together and won with 71, 72%.

Sunday, Kur day and they had to ride the big final which was again being held in the main arena. Philippa was hoping that since he had been in the day before he would be more settled. But of course being Sunday everyone had come to the competition, the crowd was monstrous and very close to the arena. Ann Chatrin and Zanko had done a brilliant kur as per usual including 3 time changes on a half 20m circle and had finished with a score of 73,49%.

Benedict exploded as his music started but she managed to get him back and down the centerline. Once in the test he didn't quite settle but he did listen and do all his movements. We won with 75, 76%. Another exciting hat trick for SA.

