

Germany's prowess confirmed with Wulschner's victory

Equestrianism

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Germany, already the winners of the Super League Nations Cup on Friday, completed their domination of the showjumping events at this year's Longines Royal International Horse Show at Hickstead when Holger Wulschner and Clausen, his prolific grand prix winner, won the historic King George V Gold Cup after relegating Pieter Devos, of Belgium, on Equipharma Tekila to runner-up by a fraction of a second.

Geoff Billington on Rosinus, a horse he started riding only in February, had raised hopes of a first British success in the event since 1999 after completing a second clear round in the seven-horse jump-off but had to settle for third place. Lady riders, allowed to compete for the first time in the 100-year history of the event, failed to outpace the men — Nicole Shahinian-Simpson of the United States, who was fifth on Dragonfly, produced the best performance.

Wulschner, 44, had impressed on Friday when his clear round had secured the Nations Cup for Germany. He considers Clausen, 12, the best horse he has ever sat on. Already this year he has won three grands prix. Last year he was in the winning Nations Cup teams in Dublin

and Calgary. The horse's feats have attracted a flurry of high offers but Siegfried Kludt, his owner, has no intention of selling.

"He said a fortnight ago that I could buy a half share of the horse for €1 and he would give the other half to his two-year-old daughter in order to show that he is not for sale," Wulschner said. In the event, the deal was done for €10. "I didn't have a euro on me," Wulschner said.

Yesterday the German-bred gelding gave an impressive display of his fast, accurate jumping. The third to go against the clock his fluent round brought him home in 54.26 sec. Devos, 22, drawn second, had always been in awe of Hickstead and was nervously looking forward to his debut. But his riding betrayed no hint of alarm with only 0.23sec separating him from Wulschner.

On Saturday, Douglas Bunn, the founder of Hickstead, had the satisfaction of watching his son-in-law, Shane Breen of Ireland on the brilliant young stallion Carmena Z become the first male winner of the Queen Elizabeth II Cup — which for 59 years had been for lady riders only.

Breen produced a second masterly clear round in the five-horse jump-off but he was reluctant to claim any credit for it. "He's fantastic, you just



Leap into history: Shahinian-Simpson was the best-placed lady rider in the King George V Gold Cup, an event that permitted women for the first time

point him at a fence and he jumps it," he said of the eight-year-old Irish stallion. William Funnell on Billy Birr, the favourite with the on-course bookmaker, also had a clear round but failed to match Breen's fast time.

There was optimism yesterday — fuelled by a glowing report of Hickstead's facilities from John Roche of the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) — that a Super League Nations Cup will be retained

at Hickstead when the new changes, requiring a £250,000 prize fund for the Grand Prix, are brought in by the FEI next year. The new format, which will reduce the number of venues from eight to six, is being discussed by the FEI Jumping Committee today.

● The first 32 of a total 220 horses competing in the Beijing Olympic Games arrived safely in Hong Kong, the venue for the equestrian events, on Saturday.