

The Jumpers Pass with Flying Colours

With veterinary inspection behind them, the show jumpers are ready for the start of their Olympic competition.

August 14, 2008

A total of 87 Jumping horses were presented for veterinary inspection at the Olympic equestrian venue in Sha Tin, Hong Kong this morning and all passed with flying colours, with no visitors to the holding box.

There were three changes to the Olympic Jumping start-list yesterday (Wednesday) when it was confirmed that Michael Whitaker's Portofino, Alvaro Miranda Neto's Ad Picolien and Daniel Meech's Sorbas were all withdrawn.

The loss of the experienced Portofino is a major blow to the British team, but the 14-year old mare had been suffering from intermittent bouts of lameness over the previous few days and a decision was taken to withdraw her and call up the reserve partnership of Nick Skelton and Russel as replacements. Skelton will be competing in his fifth Olympic contest when the action begins tomorrow (Friday) evening and his presence is all the more remarkable for the fact that he suffered a broken neck in September 2000 but made an amazing recovery to return to the sport at very top level.

For Alvaro Miranda Neto there was disappointment when Ad Picolien was declared unfit, and the man who finished 12th individually at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004 and who was a member of the bronze medal winning Brazilian team at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 will now be obliged to watch his colleagues Bernardo Alves (Chupa Chup), reigning Olympic champion Rodrigo Pessoa (Rufus), Pedro Veniss (Un Blanc de Blancs) and Camilla Benedicto (Bonito Z) from the sidelines.

Daniel Meech will be replaced by Kirk Webby and Sitah on the New Zealand team. Had he been in a position to compete, this would have been Meech's second Olympic outing as he previously rode Diagonal in Athens. Fellow-Kiwi Katie McVean's 16-year old Forest was one of the eye-catchers of the morning but, for many, the man of the moment was Jos Lansink's much-loved stallion Cumano who has only recently returned to the ring after an enforced break due to the tendon injury he suffered last autumn. Cumano is always a show-stealer with his flashy jump and teddy-bear personality and he looked in great shape today. If the 15-year old horse can find anything like his top form then the reigning World Championship partnership will be ones to watch when the competition begins tomorrow night.

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