

FURUSIYYA FEI
NATIONS CUP
CSIO4* SHINES
AT HITS OCALA



the Nations Cup Spreads *its wings*



The morning of February 13th, 2015 dawned crisp and bright in Ocala, Florida; it was the type of weather that makes—and keeps—horses fresh. For the group of international show jumpers who gathered in this mid-state, horse-rich region, it sharpened the edge of the all-important competition that was to take place.

More than just points in the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup League, presented by Longines, were on the line. When the HITS Ocala Winter Circuit was chosen as host of the United States' only Furusiyya Nations Cup competition, it marked a significant step up for the venue, and its first foray into hosting FEI-ranked show jumping.

The butting of heads between rival watch brands Longines and Rolex was the crux that brought the Furusiyya Nations Cup competition, long a Winter Equestrian Festival tradition 350 miles to the south (at the Rolex-sponsored venue in Wellington), to new audiences at HITS Ocala. But out of conflict arose new opportunity: the opportunity to showcase what John Madden called "the most important event for the FEI" to a new audience. It was an opportunity to grow the reach of the Nations Cup format, an important step in



popularizing the league in the USA. And for Ireland, it was a chance to flex its growing power.

In the competition between six nations, Ireland led the victory gallop with what could arguably be called its B Team: four developing horses, piloted by four Irish riders, who ranged from rookie to World Equestrian Games veteran.

"This is a developing team," said Chef d'equipe Robert Splaine. "We've got a lot of Irish riders here in America. Ireland is always looking to broaden the team base and so I come over to see them a lot."

But as US-based Kevin Babington, Conor Swail, Darragh Kenny and Lorcan Gallagher proved, developing was best on a day that saw the luck swing their way.

"We came here as four great lads, and we always come to a Nations Cup very prepared and ready to do our best," commented Swail. "Thankfully, all of our horses jumped very well, and everything was good. The place was beautiful and the footing was fantastic."

The United States finished in second place behind Ireland, and the Colombian team rounded out the top three in what was their best Nations Cup finish to date.



Clockwise from top: Daniel Bluman helped Colombia ride to an historic 3rd place finish; Lorcan Gallagher performed spectacularly aboard Diktator Van De Boslandhoeve as the rookie of the Irish team; Darragh Kenny, Kevin Babington, Robert Splaine, Gallagher and Conor Swail atop the podium; Lauren Hough and Ohlala compete for the USA.