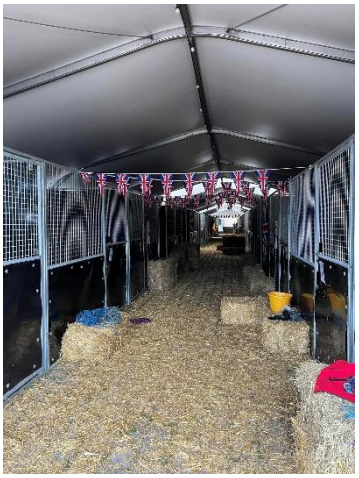
FITE World Junior TREC Championships 2024, Schlaijk, Netherlands

Arrival at parkers

We all arrived at John Parkers International in the afternoon after long drives from our separate corners of the country and were all delighted to see each other once again. The next day we all got up and went out on a short hack in the wonderful woodlands literally right opposite the Parkers yard. It was a nice hack but also an important leg stretch for the horses who were set to travel early the following morning. Later that day we all had a bit of a play in the arena at our MA's and PTV's before getting ready for a nice evening out at the pub. It was then back to Parkers for an early night.

Travelling



With our alarms set for 4.30am it was an early start to get the horses loaded on the transporter and to wave them off. We weren't far behind after skipping out the stables and a bit of last minute packing we were all on the road down to the port. Typically, both ours and the horse's ferries were delayed for about three hours!! After the very annoying wait we were all on our ferries, with the horses setting off roughly an hour ahead of us. By the time we made it over to Callais the horses had just finished their vet checks and were roughly half an hour ahead of us. Slowly one by one we all overtook the horses at different points and got to the venue roughly one hour before they did, which gave us time to prepare their stables and make sure there was water ready and waiting for when they arrived. The horses arrived safe and sound and settled in nice and quickly. By this point it was getting late, so we all went to find our accommodation for the week and hire bikes as they made getting to and from the stables so much easier as it was roughly only a three-minute bike ride.

Day two morning

This morning deserves its own section!! It had been raining none stop since the horses arrived with thunder and lightning just to add to it. We arrived at the to find every single stable flooded, beds ruined, and hay no longer useable. We had to skip it all out and put entirely new bedding down after just doing it the day before. Best to say we weren't happy about this as we found out the hard way we had the only stables that got flooded and we were obviously at the lowest point of the yard. Very annoying!!

Days leading up to the event



The next few days were full of recceing the surrounding area (mainly woodland) on both horse and bike, getting a feel for the type of area we will be competing in and what sort of difficulties we will come across. As well as scouting the area we spent some time in the arenas popping some jumps and practicing our MA's. We made sure these days weren't too much stress for both horse and rider but at the same time tough enough to make sure we were ready. The day before the POR all horses had their first vet check, and all horses passed just fine. First stressful part out the way, many more to come...

Opening ceremony



Unfortunately, this year the opening ceremony was all on foot and didn't include any horses which was a shame, but we still walked into that arena flying our flags proudly.



POR day

It was POR day and tensions were high. It was an early start for the seniors however I wasn't in the map room till 12.45pm. It felt like the morning went on forever as I waited my turn. Round came 12 o'clock and it was time for me to start tacking up ready for the map room. With the amazing help from Rebecca and brilliant Chef D'Equipe Kathryn me and Jingo were ready for anything.

I went into the map room handed my phone in to be sealed, sat at my table and got my pens to the ready, waiting for the infamous 'GO'... I flipped over both maps, found the start and began to draw!! It was an interesting map that stopped after 16km and then restarted at a different point roughly 2km from the finish. It became clear why this was when out on course, however I had my assumptions when we were also instructed to plot two grid points A and B that were shown on the master map.

With my route drawn I was up and out of the map room where I met my trusty steed. I was on and we were off!! For the first half of my route, I felt I was absolutely smashing it, my timings felt perfect and Jingo still had plenty left in the tank. Just over halfway round we came into a checkpoint where they took my map from me, sealed it in an envelope and then handed me a piece of paper with a worm map on that twisted through thick woods!! How British of them!! As I had roughly 25 minutes until it was my time to leave the checkpoint I had plenty of time to measure each section of the route and write it down so all I had to do was take the bearing and count.



This is where things unfortunately went downhill for me as I picked up an injury in the early stages of the worm map. I was looking down preparing my next bearing only to look up and see what I believe was a fallen tree ready to take me out. With Jingo flying along in trot there was not enough time to pick up my reins and stop him, so I had to quickly duck. Scraping my side against the underside of the tree it ripped open my jacket and broke the strap, sending the equipment I was carrying everywhere. Unfortunately did the tree not only get my kit but it got me too, scraping off the top layer of my skin, this was far from ideal and certainly not helpful when trying to concentrate in pain.

After this I lost my head a little which wasn't helped by compasses not agreeing with each other and wanting to send me in opposite directions!! I eventually got back on track and was on my way again attempting to catch up on my times. Best to say I was relieved to ride into the next checkpoint where they checked my map was still sealed and then

allowed me to open it back up. This next section was a little tricky and was certainly testing, especially this late on in the ride. Two checkpoints later I reached the end of my drawn route, this is where I was handed a piece of paper instructing me to pick my own path to join together the two drawn sections of route via points A and B, which I mentioned earlier I had plotted when in the map room. This part was fairly simple as you couldn't really go wrong as long as you knew where you were on your map without a route to follow. At each point there was a manned ticket waiting to ticket punch your record card before sending you on your way. After visiting both points, I made my way to the start of the other part of my route where I was greeted by another checkpoint.

I was so close to the finish now with only roughly 2km to go and it was a nice feeling to be almost back. I set off from the checkpoint and after roughly only 1km I was greeted by yet another checkpoint who happily told me they were the finish which after six hours in the saddle I was delighted to hear. I made sure to take it steady back to the venue keeping in mind Jingo's heart rate, where I was greeted by a lovely set of GB flags as everyone was waiting for me, quite literally as I was the last young rider back and only the second to last rider back in the whole competition!!

I held my flag high and proud as I entered back into the venue before getting Jingo back to the stables where it was all hands on deck to get his heart hate down ready for the vetting, which was 30 minutes after I passed the finish line. We got to the vetting, and it turned out the vet was more concerned about me with blood showing through my top than she was about Jingo who was absolutely fine and passed with ease. I had to insist that I was fine too!! It was then time to deal with me which was much easier than the horse, a bit of horse bandage and duct tape from our very own team doctor did the trick...

MA and PTV



The next morning we woke up to news that provisional POR results were soon to come out, so we headed quickly down the stables ready for their release and wow was I shocked by them!! 185 and only 42 points behind the leader was amazing and still all to play for with day two to go. My MA was nice and early following an even earlier vet check. I had a good warm up and was ready to go. I entered the main arena with my name being announced and set off into my canter. Jingo did a lovely slow canter all the way round to score us an amazing maximum 30 points, followed by a decent walk scoring us another 8 points.

Getting ready for my PTV I needed to get some jumping practise so I started off at around 60cm and popped over the warm up fence a few times before raising it up to a full metre. At this point I was the only rider in the PTV warm up ring, and I noticed that the French Chef D'Equipe was watching me whilst talking to someone. It was a nice feeling knowing he was watching as me and Jingo flew over a metre (bearing in mind we only had to jump 90cm out on course)!! I was called through to go down to the start of the PTV and Jingo was raring to go. After not the best start scoring 0 on the first obstacle we didn't let that happen again as we went on to get numerous 9's and 10's giving us an overall score of 117 and 0 time penalties on a challenging course that we had only 7

minutes to complete which was very tight when you had to include several mounts and dismounts that weren't even judged. My favourite obstacle had to be the path crossing right before the gallop to the finish, Jingo absolutely flew over them as all the supporters cheered from all different countries as we landed from the second fence and flew to the finish. After such a storming round we ended up on a total score of 340 which put me 14th in the world and only 82 points from the winner, considering everything from only riding Jingo about four times prior to the competition to not having the easiest of times on the POR, it was quite an achievement. Also knowing I was the highest placed GB rider was quite something.

Closing ceromancy

The closing ceromancy the prizes were for the top 8 riders which I only missed out on by about 30 points (roughly the number of points I believe I would have got if it wasn't for my little accident) but oh well. To be only beaten by the French, Spanish and one German was quite an achievement for me, proving I am good enough to hold my own at this level. After the closing ceremony we all enjoyed a good party, swapping shirts and goodie bags, as well as having a good dance, we all had brilliant night.

Traveling home

Getting up very early the next morning to get all packed up ready for our trek home wasn't the nicest feeling as it meant it was all over, but also the countdown is on for next year!! The journey home was much better than on the way out with no delays and even catching an earlier ferry than we had booked. All horses arrived home safely and got some much deserved rest.

Overall, it was an absolutely brilliant experience and I want to say a massive thank you to every single person that helped me get there.

Jacob Simpson, TREC GB Young Rider 2024



Team GB 2024