

Matthias Alexander Rath: The setting can't be big enough for Totilas

The currently most famous equestrian sport pair missed the last Championships. Just in time for the FEI European Championships Aachen 2015 from August 11th-23rd, Matthias Alexander Rath and Totilas are in top form. The 30-year-old dressage rider revealed in an interview what competing in Aachen has to do with superstition, what he is expecting to happen in the duel between the top stars Totilas and Valegro and why competing in the Main Stadium could be an advantage for him.

One month before the FEI European Championships dressage competitions in Aachen...

Matthias Alexander Rath: ...the anticipation is indescribable. On the one hand, it is super that Totilas and I are actually being able to compete at the European Championships, because we haven't taken part in any Championships over the past few years. Of course, a European Championships in one's own country is always special, but the fact that it is also being staged in Aachen is simply fantastic. Especially since Totilas has won every Grand Prix that he has competed in so far in Aachen – it couldn't be a better omen for the coming August!

The dressage riders will be competing in the Main Stadium, does that provide additional motivation?

Rath: In 2006, I experienced the World Championships dressage competitions in the Main Stadium as a spectator – it was tremendous. Being able to ride at the CHIO in the Deutsche Bank Stadium is already an exceptional experience, there is no comparable arena anywhere else in the world for us. Riding in the Main Stadium myself in this magnificent setting is going to be super.

Is it possible that this setting will put too much pressure on the horses and riders?

Rath: For Totilas it can't be big enough. The bigger the setting, the bigger and more alert Totilas is. And up until now, I have always succeeded in focusing very well during the competition and don't actually take in much of what happens outside of the dressage arena. And I have practised a bit in the big stadium – during the Farewell of the Nations (laughing).

So you are not frightened about the duel between the two dressage giants, Totilas and Valegro?

Rath: The omens aren't too bad there either. Totilas, succeeded in coming out on top at the hitherto only encounter between the two in 2014 in Aachen. But, of course, it will be incredibly difficult: Valegro and Charlotte Dujardin have won everything there is to win, and in the meantime have also managed to defend some of the titles. They are the crème de la crème. But Aachen proved that everything is possible a year ago. Kristina Bröring-Sprehe and Desperados are also in top-class form. It is going to be an exciting story.

What is your schedule up until the FEI European Championships?

Rath: The next few days will be a little quieter, before continuing with and intensifying the training in good time, which will approximately be at the end of next week. Of course, we will do a few test rounds to improve our routine at competitions. But last year showed that we are able to call up top performances quickly without competing much.

You have never been hectic, has the birth of your son made you even more laid-back?

Rath: Sure. When you come home in the evening, you know: There is more than just sport, there are more important things to win and lose. However, one thing is also clear: When I am sitting in the saddle, I am totally concentrated and want to win.