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Auguste Dubey, in the large paddock of the federal depot for Army horses with a team of horses, which only a true master in the art can put together: a random, therefore three horses are harnessed one in front of the other. (Collection's photograph)

Equestrian Sport

The gold medal awarded to Christine Stückelberger at the European Dressage Championships in Kiev in 1975 put Swiss horsemanship at international level back on the map. This first place in the European championship was the climax of a season which one may properly describe only by calling it «brilliant»: Each *grand prix* which she attended, she won. At the international horse show at Aachen alone, she won six first places, of which four on her at the time best horse «Granat» of which one said at his *début* at the Olympic Games in Munich that he yearned for the harness, thus marking him as completely unsuitable for dressage. This «cart horse» has today

become a first-class dressage animal!

Christine Stückelberger has continued the tradition with the former military teams with the horsemen Chammartin, Fischer and Trachsel. Henry Chammartin, as is well known, was not only olympic champion, but several times European champion as well.

Thanks to the efforts of the chief dressage administrator, Hans Syz, and the coach of the dressage team, Georg Wahl, Christine Stückelberger is not alone, but behind her are a number of young men and women that form a team for Switzerland to be taken seriously as an opponent, even though as individuals they are perhaps not – not yet

– in the first rows. It is particularly gratifying that this group again includes two horsemen of the Federal Military Horse Establishment.

This unbroken series of victories puts Switzerland up to the unenviable position of favourite as regards individual judgment. That Christine Stückelberger possesses the necessary strong nerves, she has proved on several occasions. She herself considers a quite different difficult point: «Granat» has the habit to first look around in any new surroundings, and that, of course, is detrimental to concentration. For this reason, the top horse was already saddled for the presentation of the nations in Kiev,

so that he could get to know the surroundings already at that stage. The position is not quite so rosy with the show jumping riders, although one may generally count on good results. Apart from Paul Weier, always proving safe in ticklish moments, and still number one, some young horsemen have broken through who are perfectly able to take part in the international field: above all the new Swiss champion Walter Gabathuler, who has shown up regularly internationally, then Bruno Candrian, Willy Melliger, Jürg Friedli and others. Whether they come up to olympic standard will be shown in Montreal. It has been said often enough and does not have to be repeated again here that not too much significance must be given to the team results in second place at the European Championships of 1975. Disappointments unfortunately with the «crown of equestrian sport», endurance trials, better known in Switzerland under «Military» which tenaciously upholds its name. Apart from an occasional

light moment – as an example a first place for Alfred Schwarzenbach on «Big Boy» at the International Horse Trials at Moelbling – the results of the past few years have not been exactly brilliant. At the European Championships at Luhmuehlen, only one Swiss reached the final stage of the trials. It happened to be the one rider who had the least experience and actually came up from the «lower ranks» of endurance riders, from amongst the «rural horsemen».

There have also been disappointments in the last few years amongst the adherents of harness horse racing, which put a question mark against the coming world championships. The drivers do not compete in olympic games; for them there are European Championships in uneven years and World Championships in even years. Whilst Auguste Dubey achieved second place in combination class at the CHIO at Aachen and thus gave rise to hopes, Robert Doudin, with the horse team of the Federal Stud-

farm at Avenches, hardly reminded one of his best times.

At the European Championships at Sopot, the field course in the third part of the combined tests, did not suit the three Swiss at all. Christian Iseli, in second place at the World Championships at Frauenfeld in 1974, Robert Doudin, also in second place at the European Championships at Windsor, and Auguste Dubey completed the tests in places 1, 15 and 1, so that no medal went to Switzerland, neither in team nor individual rating, in spite of a very good beginning in presentation (inspection) and in dressage.

The best driver of the Swiss team, Auguste Dubey, has retired from active sport. It would be false modesty, not to look back once more on his brilliant career: World Champion in the first ever World Championship for drivers of four-in-hands (Muenster 1972); European Champion 1973 at Windsor, in individual, as well as, together with Doudin, in team classification; four times victor in the combination tests for four-in-hands at the CHIO at Aachen, which counted as World Championships unofficially until they were introduced officially. There is no second driver who commands such an impressive collection of proud titles and distinctions. He won the first Swiss Championships in Switzerland last year, and he jokingly used this as the reason for his retirement «There are no more titles which I have not got already!» His team of horses, the famous chestnut bays of the Federal Stud-farm, will be taken over by Ulrich Lehmann. Nevertheless, Auguste Dubey will remain first driver at the Federal Stud-farm, not only as instructor of drivers, but also as coach of the whole Swiss team. This is a fact which gives rise to justified hopes for the future.

Swiss Equestrian Federation
René Pezold

The Swiss jumping champion in full action, Mr. Walter Gabathuler on Butterfly III.

