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Charlotte Dujardin and the stunning Mount St John VIP dominated the small tour with a hat-trick of wins

been in Germany all day then my flight was delayed by two hours on the way home because of the wind," he said. "I landed at 5pm got here for 7pm and now I have a two-and-a-half-hour journey home, so I will have been up about 24 hours."

Carl added Barney's competition break "certainly did him the world of good."

"He had been on the go for five years doing championships and a World Cup Final, so he deserved a break," he said. "People think it is easy to keep them going, but it is actually not the riding, it is the constant travelling. We turned him away for a bit in the summer and Jane has been enjoying riding him — he does polework and goes to the water treadmill and things like that which keep him interested without me having to school him. At the end of the day, he deserves a semi-easier life now."

Carl cited Windsor as his next aim for the horse, whom he plans to compete at UK shows, with *Hawtins Delicato* being his main contender for this summer's Europeans squad.

Charlotte and Erly's freestyle, ridden to Valegro's *How to Train Your Dragon* soundtrack, featured plenty of highlights, including huge canter extensions and beautifully executed pirouettes.

This was somewhat of a catch-ride for the triple Olympic gold medallist — Erly's owner/rider Sonnar Murray-Brown is out of action with a broken leg and asked Charlotte if she would take over the reins while he recovers.

"I did my first grand prix on him last week at Myerscough [also scoring 77%], then brought him here," explained Charlotte, adding she has helped Sonnar with the horse previously, so he wasn't a total unknown.

"I love that horse to bits, he has

a heart of gold. He is just so cool to ride and makes me smile because he tries his heart out. He just is an incredible horse and Sonny has done a fantastic job of training him for me to be able to just get on and go in there."

Charlotte added she was annoyed with herself for a couple of mistakes in the grand prix on the first night.

"I was trying too hard and I was so annoyed to make mistakes in the zig-zag and the one-time changes because those were rider error — I over-rode him. I learnt from my mistakes and then for the freestyle knew not to do that," she said.

"These are all the things I have to get to know — how much I can and can't push him in there at the moment."

Danish rider Anders Dahl completed the top three on both nights with the 10-year-old chestnut gelding *Fidelio Van Het Bloemenhof*.

The pair rode to the powerful

music made for Anders' Olympic horse, *Selten HW*, with the rain hammering on the arena roof adding to the dramatic atmosphere.

"He was a little bit excited in the beginning, then he had good two-time changes, a nice rhythm, technique and his half-passes are good," added Anders, who is aiming for European selection this year. "He is the best grand prix horse I have had."

Top British combinations were out in force and took six of the top 10 places in the freestyle.

Gareth Hughes and Don Carissimo rode to the summery sounds of Avicii, Kygo and *The Greatest Showman* in their freestyle. Their beautifully flowing test was rewarded with a score of 73.95% by the judges, putting them in fourth just 0.05% behind Anders.

Emma Hindle and Romy Del Sol's polished performance scored 72.45% for fifth, with Maria Eilberg and Royal Concert sixth



Anders Dahl and Florina 146 finish second in every small tour class

## TALKING POINTS

### INVESTMENT IS WELL RECEIVED

KEYSOE'S £750,000 investment in its infrastructure was well received.

The venue announced the project last year, with money being spent on a refurbished indoor surface, new outdoor arenas and more stabling.

Carl Hester thanked owner Simon Bates for the work he has put in to developing the venue.

The new hospitality area was also launched and sold out on its first night.

### WINNING STREAK

THE trio of wins for Mount St John VIP in the small tour took her unbeaten stretch to 11 consecutive wins.

The mare has never scored less than 71%, has now won 36 out of her 44 starts and never finished lower than fourth.

### RAISING THE ROOF

ULRIK MOLGAARD and Michigan's (pictured, below) grand prix freestyle soundtrack raised the energy levels through the roof and received cheers from the crowd.

It opened with the "mamase mamasa mamakusa" riff from Michael Jackson's *Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'*, going onto *Le Freak* by Chic then sampling some of Kool & The Gang's *Celebration*.

Other hits included Frankie Goes To Hollywood's *The Power of Love*, which Ulrik matched masterfully to the gelding's prowling walk, and Sister Sledge's *We Are Family*.

