

Sport and society, legends and waving farewell at the CHIO Aachen 2018.

Tennis has Wimbledon, football has Wembley and the equestrian sport has Aachen. The top equestrian athletes in the world meet up here once a year at the traditional showgrounds between the green hills and the gates of the old imperial city. Cheered on by more than 350,000 visitors, they battle it out in the five disciplines jumping, dressage, eventing, four-in-hand driving and vaulting. The stadiums have long since become temples of their sport, the Main Stadium holds 40,000 spectators, the Deutsche Bank Stadium, where the dressage competitions are staged, has a capacity for 6,000 spectators. The Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, once said “the heart of the equestrian sport beats in Aachen.”

And yet not only outstanding sporting performances will be celebrated at the World Equestrian Festival, CHIO Aachen 2018 (July 13<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>). Numerous guests from the fields of sport and the media, from cultural, business, political circles and the high society will be travelling to Aachen again, simply to be part of it all. Be there when the show kicks-off with a magnificent parade – the traditional Opening Ceremony on Tuesday evening. Or when the stars and starlets meet up on the red carpet at the “Media Night”. Because the show, that is organised by the Aachen-Laurensberger Rennverein e.V., which was founded in 1898, has also long since become a social mega event.

Some of the most famous competitions in the world form the highlights of the ten days in Aachen. For example, the “Rolex Grand Prix”, the Grand Prix of Aachen that has been staged since 1927. Or the Mercedes-Benz Nations’ Cup, the famous and prestigious “international match” of the show-jumpers. The best dressage riders in the world compete against each other in the Deutsche Bank Prize, the Dressage Grand Prix of Aachen. The names of all of the victorious riders are listed on the silver winners’ board at the entrance of the Main Stadium. Reading one’s own name here is the crowning glory of every athlete’s career. As Hans Günter Winkler, the show jumping legend once put it, “In order to be one of the really big names, you have to have won Aachen.”

But Aachen is also above all one thing: A festival for the public, a folk festival. A festival that provides fantastic entertainment with its spectacular supporting programme, with shows and concerts, with child care in the “CHIO Aachen ROBY CLUB” and a diversified stage programme. In between, with its more than 200 tents and various restaurants, the “CHIO Village” invites the guests to shop and while away the time. All of this comes together to create that exceptional CHIO Aachen atmosphere, which reaches its climax on Sunday evening: Namely, when the last sporting result has been decided in the late afternoon of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, then both the visitors and the participants produce their white hankies to “wave farewell” and promise they will be back again next year. Here at the Soers in Aachen, the Wimbledon, the Wembley of the riding sport.

