

SIENNA HOLDS MARKET PLACE BERRY

It's flag day in Siena....and, as an old Tuscan custom, it has its merits. For one thing, there are no collection boxes. The flags are the prizes for which the various wards of the town compete in a festival which is in harmony with its surroundings.

Each ward has its own banner, and most of the bearers graduated at five years old from the elementary business of holding the pole upright with the butt stuck in the socket of a belt.

Highlight of the day is the horse race around the historic Piazza del Campo. Every ward sends a horse and rider to compete for the honour of holding the flag of Siena for the ensuing year. Run over a cobbled surface, more than one rider is unseated in negotiating the sharp turns.

A little white horse is making the running....and it's riderless! So what, the prize is open to the first horse past the post...and the white horse wins.

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"PALIO" AT SIENA

Italian summer festivals reach a peak with the traditional "Palio" (a medioeval tourney) at Siena, that takes place every year, on July 2nd. The tourney begins with the passing by of competitors in their historical dresses of the 15th century. The "play of the banners" is enthusiastically watched by a cosmopolitan crowd. Yet the climax of the festival is the tourney itself. Horses and jockeys are lined up, representing the following quarters of the ancient town of Siena: Istrice, Aquila, Giraffa, Pantera, Oca, Licorno, Bruco, Dupo, Civetta e Onda. Now, they are off. The hockey representing "Oca" falls. But his little white horse continues running. Now it succeeds even in beating "Istrice", and taking the lead, it goes past the post winner by nearly 2 lengths.