

The magic of Paris

Winning in Paris is something to celebrate! And today's winners certainly wouldn't argue with that. Amateurs or champions, media or show jumping stars, they all share a passion for this beautiful sport and for victory and a taste for the six star arena.

This morning the Invitational Trophy provided the backdrop for three wonderful stories. The winner of the first round of the Prix Bang & Olufsen at 1.15m was Benjamin Castaldi. He was on his new horse, Carlito d'Es, which he jumped for the very first time here yesterday. Today it was with pride and joy that he notched up the first French win of the weekend and his first win at such a level! The hard work put in with his new coach Nicolas "Bosty" Bost over the last few months is paying off as his appearances on the podium become more frequent. "I am so lucky that the Bost family welcomed me into their stables! It's fantastic and so motivating!" His performance delighted Bosty and his wife Cyrille, friends as well as fans: "Everyone dreams of winning in Paris, even us," enthused the European champion of 2013. "Benjamin has fantastic energy and always wants to win."

This hunger for victory is something shared by Barbara Hurel, winner of the 1.25m Prix Bang & Olufsen. She and Orchidée de Cirka have formed a tight team for several years now and have more than half a dozen victories and numerous placings to their name this season alone. "But it's the first time I've taken part in a competition of this quality," she explained. "It's extraordinary." Yesterday her mare was put off by the six star atmosphere that filled the Parisian arena: the lights, the screens and the music. Today it was clear she had settled down again. In it to win it, the two were in perfect osmosis as they took the tight turns without ever slowing down. The time to beat looked almost insurmountable but the French rider won with more than three seconds to spare. And since one quickly gets a taste for victory in Paris, she is hoping to repeat her success on Sunday.

There was a good-natured atmosphere in the Village Prestige for the Prestige Trophy in the afternoon. Riders took the time to stroll around, chat a little and unwind at the Bar Lounge. They played ball when it came to selfies with an enthusiastic public delighted to get a chance to rub shoulders with the champions.

In the arena it was a very different story and the riders battled it out fiercely for a few seconds' advantage. And the event was full of surprises as the winner was not a top favorite - in fact Urzo d'Iso is only a seven-year-old. "I hold him back but I know he's naturally very fast and very competitive," his discreet rider, Guillaume Foutrier, confides. "The atmosphere does not bother him at all and the joker at 1.50 m posed no problem whatsoever. I tightened the corners to prepare him for what was coming up as best I could without upsetting him. I mounted him 'for him'. It's others that make the rankings." This sweet victory in Paris has delighted Urzo d'Iso's owners, Jean-Baptiste and Eugénie Gallen, who have been dreaming of it for months. "We bought



him at the beginning of the year and we have great faith in him. Guillaume rode his father, Number One d'Iso and the similarities are striking. "

And as an aside, the happy owners are also official suppliers of the Longines Masters!

As the day progressed the excitement grew - and so did the jumps. For the Prix Institut Esthederm they reached heights of 1.45m. Luc Musette had cleverly dotted the course with difficulties to make it more selective; only eight riders made it through to the jump-off. This time it was a favorite who won.

Winners yesterday of the Prix Freelance, Bronislav Chudyba and Extasy III picked up another title. Since they had the first clear round they were first to go in the jump-off - not an advantage. "I tried to get just the right amount of speed," explained the Slovakian rider. "To get far enough ahead to be difficult to beat but not so fast that I risked picking up faults." And he succeeded since only the young French rider Damien de Chambord (18 years old and a member of the French junior team) on Playboy de St Siméon managed to get near his time. He finished less than a second slower to secure second place. "I have been riding Extasy since she was six," added Chudyba. "This is our fourth season together and it was with her that I first moved up to an international level. We know each other inside out, and she's very fast. "

At 6.30 pm the temperature suddenly rose in the Village Prestige. In front of a packed crowd, the best riders in the world were about to present their lead horses for the eagerly-awaited MIASUKI Trophy at 1.50m. The event promised to be thrilling.

Some 45 riders lined up for the first round: a parade of Olympic, European and world champions, the highest-ranking riders in the world and the public's favorites. Only 20 would make it through to the jump-off, ensuring a great show right to the end. Those seeking victory, or even a place, would have to be quick. The very much on-form Patrice Delaveau presented Lacrimoso 3 HDC, his lead horse for the indoor season on which he won the Prix Emirates at the Longines Masters of Los Angeles. Paris proved to be a repeat performance. Backed by an excited public, he took every risk to finish a second and a half ahead of Germany's Daniel Deusser on his impressive Clintop. "One and a half seconds is perhaps pushing it a little far. I took risks but this is sport and I'm happy to have won tonight," said Delaveau. "The Longines Masters is a series of wonderful competitions, among the most important in the world. Also, we have already seen Lacrimoso win a Grand Prix the day after taking part in a very fast jump-off. So I hope he will be on top form on Sunday for the Longines Grand Prix which is a major goal for me this season."

The energy in the grandstand and the Longines Masters of Paris arena for the Longines Speed Challenge was extraordinary. And the fastest event in the world lived up to its reputation. "Every year there are more riders and more good horses and every year there are more and more spectators," said Bosty. And he knows what he's talking about as in six editions he has made it to the podium five times!

This year he finished in third place on Pégase du Murier. The young British rider Jessica Mendoza, 19, came in second with the only clear round of the podium. And the European vice-champion, Belgium's Grégory Wathelet, triumphed on Egano van het Slogenhof, despite one fence down like Bosty.

One peculiarity of the Longines Speed Challenge is that a downed fence only earns the rider a two second penalty so an extremely fast round can make up for the odd

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mistake which partly explains the incredible atmosphere of the evening. The other peculiarity is that the course is exactly the same in Los Angeles, Paris and Hong Kong. There is no other international competition like it. Does this mean riders can take even more risks?

“I had a plan,” admitted the winner with a smile, “and I managed to stick to it all the way round. Or almost. With that knockdown at the end of the course, I really didn’t think that I would stay in the lead, but I did.” The famous vertical N° 12 proved the deciding factor since this was where both Wathélet and Bosty picked up faults while Jessica Mendoza avoided the bar by taking a wider curve, even though this meant losing time. She is now aiming for the Longines Grand Prix on Sunday!

The class hardly had time to finish before riders and spectators were on the dance floor for DJ Jérémie Charlier’s set. Today promises another great day of sport, focusing on glamor and generosity. And rumour has it there are some surprises in store...

INFORMATION

Longines Masters of Paris

DATES : From December 3rd to 6th 2015

WEBSITE : <http://www.mastersgrandslam.com/fr>

TICKETING : Tickets available at <http://www.mastersgrandslam.com/ang/ticketing>

ABOUT EEM

To reinvent Show Jumping! What an ambitious goal EEM CEO and Founder Christophe Ameeuw and his team have set for themselves! For over ten years they have been dedicated to bringing equestrian sports to the international front stage. Inspired by the Grand Slam in tennis and its legendary tournaments, EEM gathers under one roof the best of the sport, entertainment and glamour.

2009 was a crucial milestone for EEM with the revival of the Jumping de Paris and the creation of the Gucci Paris Masters, as it marked the beginning of their international development. EEM then set off to conquer new continents. An Asian edition took place in Hong Kong in 2013, followed in 2014 by the first American stage of the Longines Masters in Los Angeles. This first edition on the American continent was welcomed by renowned sports channel ESPN with the headline “The Next Big USA Sport”.

In 2015 the intercontinental trilogy becomes the Longines Masters, presented by EEM.

ABOUT THE LONGINES MASTERS

Established in three of the biggest cities - Los Angeles, Paris and Hong Kong - the unique Longines Masters series is recognized by the Fédération Equestre Internationale and is one of the most prestigious equestrian competitions worldwide. Created by EEM, the concept of the Masters was born in 2009 with the first edition of the Gucci Paris Masters, now renamed the Longines Masters of Paris. Inspired by the Grand Slam tournaments in tennis, the circuit rapidly developed abroad, with the Longines Masters of Hong Kong in 2013 and the

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Longines Masters of Los Angeles in 2014. In ^{PARIS}2015, the circuit was renamed the Longines Masters, this term covers all legs of the series.

The world's best riders and horses will compete for one million dollars in prize money at each leg of the series. In addition, any rider who consecutively wins the Longines Masters Grands Prix in Paris, Hong Kong and Los Angeles will be rewarded with one million euros Masters Grand Slam bonus. For two successive victories, the rider will be awarded €500,000, and winners of two non-successive victories within a series of three Longines Masters Grand Prix will receive a €250,000 bonus.

These events are broadcast in more than 120 countries and reach almost 550 million viewers. Every edition of the Longines Masters is must-attend event that brings together sports enthusiasts, amateurs, celebrities and corporate decision-makers from around the world, who come to enjoy a unique experience, boasting exceptional sport, entertainment, glamour, gastronomy and contemporary art.

- . Longines Masters of Los Angeles October 1st to 4th 2015
- . Longines Masters of Paris December 3rd to 6th 2015
- . Longines Masters of Hong Kong February 19th to 21st 2016

ABOUT LONGINES

Longines has been based in Saint-Imier in Switzerland since 1832. Its watchmaking expertise reflects a strong devotion to tradition, elegance and performance. Longines has generations of experience as the official timekeeper of world championships and as a partner of international sporting federations. Over the years, Longines has established solid, long-term relationships with the sporting world. Renowned for the elegance of its timepieces, Longines is a member of the Swatch Group Ltd., the world's leading manufacturer of horological products. Using the winged hourglass as its emblem, the brand has outlets in over 140 countries. www.longines.com
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