



## International Show Jumping of France – La Baule 2008

Press release, May 10<sup>th</sup>

### THE EVENT : THE DERBY REGION PAYS DE LA LOIRE

Very rare today in show jumping, the Derby's very physical and intricate course of natural and traditional jumps poses formidable challenges for the riders competing at La Baule.

*“I have had relatively good results at La Baule and really enjoy riding The Derby with Thats Life. I knew we could have a good chance for a top ranking. Thats Life was not at his tip top condition, this year, and the course more complicated than last year's. The most difficult aspect of this year's Derby was the vertical plank jump after the first bank jump. It required a lot of precision. However, the double gate jump was easier than last year.”*

#### The French-Belgium Duel

This afternoon, Michel Hécart and his horse Thats Life captured the title of the The Derby of the International Jumping of France. The French couple was 13<sup>th</sup> to start out of 25. Even with his 4 faults on jump n°8, they demonstrated a magnificent force of concentration and technical ability. His rapid time of 145”50 made all the difference as the Belgium pairing, Ludo Philppaerts with Tauber van Het Kapelhof, performed a fluide and almost flawless round until the very last oxer...his time of 4 secondes 46 longer earned him a second place... *“If I had ridden after Michel Hécart, I would have had a better time”* regretfully states Ludo whose Belgium team won the first series of the 2008 Samsung Super League with FEI, largely in part because of his double clear round in this series of excellence. *“My horse jumped an absolutely fabulous round and the fault is for me on the last jump; I pushed too hard and it leaves a really bad taste in my mouth. I will be back next year and next year I will win!!”*

With 8 faults and the fastest time of 141”01, the Swiss, Pius Schwizer and Jamaica VIII was the 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner.

#### A question of habit ?

A spectaculaire crowd ! An invigorating atmosphere ! The passionate La Baule patrons enthusiastically roared each competitor as they entered the arena.....and with each hesitation whether the bank or water jump...the cheered the competitor on!! The long and very demanding Derby course composed of 22 jumps and 31 efforts over a distance of 1190 meters challenged even the best show jumping horses!

Michel Hécart's at 54 years old has more experience than most in this type of jumping competition. He was vice-Champion by Team at Donaueschingen (GER), member of the winning team of the 2003 Samsung Super League and was the winner of the Derby in La Baule in 2006 with the same gelding, now 13 years old.





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*“It is important to have a very respectful and courageous horse as the natural jumps can surprise a horse even if they are not high.....Thats Life has not competed that much this year however and I have kept him fit through running on the race track; it is important that an athletic horse maintain a top physical condition when not jumping regularly !”* explains Michel Hécart .

### **The Derby meeting is not an easy event...**

The Derby's originates from Hunting and was primarily composed of natural jumps. *“It is true that the Derby in Hickstead and Hambourg integrates more natural jumps, simply because they have a larger terrain. Unlike The Derby at La Baule, their courses include ditch jumps and double water jumps”* states Frédéric Cottier, the international course designer.

*“However, at La Baule, there is a very large drop jump as well as a double bank jump which require horses to be very precise and courageous. Times have changed with the integration of the Super League at La Baule and the traditional pillar of La Baule, The Derby, has had to evolve and become more like a hunt course. Because of the Derby's physical challenges, not all horses can participate as some must compete the day before in the Samsung Super League and some must compete the day after in the Grand Prix-Longines of La Baule. And for security reasons, that is why we do not want to make limit the difficulties to the end of the course”.*

