



International Show Jumping of France – La Baule 2008

Press release, May 11th

EVENT : THE GRAND PRIX LONGINES – VILLE DE LA BAULE

A technical course design, extreme precision, and timed performance, delivered an exciting moment in the world of horse sport on Sunday afternoon under the sunny skies at La Baule, France.

“My main goal was to be in the “Jump-off”. My horse has been performing very well, however nothing can be taken for granted so it was very important that I remain vigilant” enthusiastically explained Irishman Denis Lynch, who added his name for the first time to the prestigious list of winners of the Grand Prix Longines – Ville de La Baule.

Denis Lynch and Lantinus 3 were one of only nine couples to qualify for the Jump-off, two of them being French. The Irish couple completed a clear round in 43”33 to claim victory, making La Baule Lynch’s 5th Grand Prix win, coming just after last week’s triumph at the CSI 5* of Hambourg.

Second place was won with an extraordinary performance by Olivier Robert (FRA) on his rebellious 9 year-old stallion, Le Galant, who put on quite a show by continually launching impressive bucks between jumps, yet finishing the course with no faults. *“It is difficult to explain, but Le Galant’s behavior is not a problem for me”*, explained the highly motivated 32 year-old Olivier Robert. *“I didn’t lose my balance nor my concentration...and Gilles Bertran de Balanda’s (national coach) last minute advice before entering the ring, echoed in my ears: don’t forget to breath during the bucks and just remember that this horse has enough talent to jump mountains!”*

Le Galant and Oliver Robert have competed together for 5 years. Both from the Bordeaux region, it was their very first time jumping at the Grand Prix level. *“We started our season three months ago and have spent a tremendous amount of time dealing with Le Galant’s insubordinate, bucking nature...As you saw today, we weren’t very successful”* giggles Olivier Robert. *“Our work was very French”* he laughs again. Their short-term goals are to next compete at the Grand Prix at the CSI in Cannes in June and then the in-door circuit next winter.

The 3rd place of this Grand Prix Longines of La Baule went to the notable Englishman, Nick Skelton, riding his Arko III with 4 faults and in a time of 42”88. The Longines oxer proved once again to be his greatest difficulty, just like in the Derby, the day before.

The course concocted by the adept, former French National Team rider, Frédéric Cottier, was designed in such a way so that faults were not consistently committed on any one jump but made throughout the course. As Canadian rider, Eric Lamaze, ranked 6th internationally, remarked during the course presentation, the white and grey jumps were the most difficult, especially jumps n° 12, 7 and 4 as well as the In-and-Outs. There were only 9 clear rounds out of 40 couples.





International Show Jumping of France – La Baule 2008

“I wanted the Grand Prix Longines to present the same challenge and prestige as the Samsung Super League as well as match the riders skills with the course design...I try to imagine, as a competitor, how I would ride the course...I am not always 100% accurate but I do believe that this year’s winner earned his ride!”

Very much like Formula 1 pilots, the Grand Prix riders must memorize the course just minutes before the competition with one important difference - there are no trial runs. Just 15 minutes to walk the ‘jump-off’ course, memorizing it’s obstacles and analysing the difficulties which will decide the winning couple. In comparison, it would be as if the Monaco or Magny-Cours race-car courses changed each year and the Fernando Alonso, Kimi Raikkönen or Lewis Hamiltons of the Formula 1 world had just a few minutes before the start of the race to memorize the race routes and determine a strategy.

Even if the Rider/Horse combination gallops around 18 km/h compared to 350 km/h in Formula 1, the bars of an oxer that are as high as 1.5 to 1.6 meters fall very quickly. As with high-jumping or the 200- meter hurdle races in field and track, where the athlete must count the number of strides to determine the best way to clear the hurdle, the number of strides before jumping the Vertical or Oxer or In-and-Out in order to be clear must be precisely determined - during the reconnaissance before the competition begins.

Hands and Horses

All high-level competitive sports look easy...however the reality is that behind the finished product are years of preparation with great attention to detail...when adding a “live being” to the equation, the horse, the objective becomes more complicated. To successfully complete a series of jumps, it takes the combined skills of both horse and rider.

To jump correctly the horse must have his weight balanced on his backend...the horse must understand and obey the messages communicated to it by the rider’s hands, legs and weight to be able to adjust the number of strides required for each respective jump. Mastery of riding technique combined with course strategy are the keys to winning!

