



IV INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-MAURICE BONNEAU

DO MORE WITH LESS

At the start of the 2005 outdoor season, Jean-Maurice Bonneau, national trainer of the French team, gives a description of the couples at his disposal, with three major events in his line of sight:

The Samsung Super League Samsung (SSL), of which the first of the eight stages is in La Baule, and which the French brilliantly claimed in 2003 and 2004.

The Mediterranean Games (Almeria, Spain, 24 June to 7 July).

The European Championship (San Patrignano, Italy, from 21–24 July).

Which leaves just a World Cup campaign, won in 2004 by Bruno Broucqsault and Dilème de Cèphe, where three French couples were present: Bruno Broucqsault and Hooligan de Rosyl, Philippe Léoni and Cyrenaïka and Hubert Bourdy and Ève des Étisses.

If the mood of the trainer is always very competitive, it should be noted that many couples are missing to him, and that no solid team base really emerges. With fewer candidates hitting their stride and ready to go to war, the trainer must do better (after the Olympic Games disappointment) with less of the resources in terms of powerful combinations. Objectively: *“Of the 14 couples who have participated in the SSL victories, nine are out for a variety of reasons.”*

- Dollar du Mûrier and Eric Navet (the couple injured at the Olympic Games, then separated by the horse's owner);
- Dilème de Cèphe and Bruno Broucqsault, following a ruptured tendon at the Olympic Games, the horse is still convalescing;
- Cigale du Taillis and Eugénie Angot: the mare has stopped with a touch of piroplasmiasis;
- Tlaloc M and Reynald Angot: the stallion underwent a serious operation following an attack of colic;
- Galet d'Auzay and Michel Robert: the horse is suffering with a left foreleg, probably caused by the fall the couple had during the CSI-W Bordeaux, and will be out for at least four weeks, counting from 5 April, during which time he's allowed only to walk;
- Diamant de Sémilly and Eric Levallois: the stallion has not yet returned to competition following some health problems;
- Édouard Couperie and Pro Pilot: the horse is convalescing;
- Hubert Bourdy and Ève des Étisses: competing in the World Cup at Las Vegas, and will return later in the season;
- Florian Angot and First de Launay HN: the stallion is covering mares until mid-May.

In brief, the trainer has five couples for La Baule who have already competed in SSL: Gilles de Balanda and Crocus Graverie, Michel Hécart and Kannan, Christian Hermon and Éphèbe For Ever*La Silla, Jean-Marc Nicolas and JPC Modesto, and Laurent Goffinet and Flipper d'Elle HN. It remains to be hoped that their progression will be solidified this year

and that they will become the pillars which are lacking today. *"In any case, the French team has the capacity to exceed itself when it is needed and I trust my riders. This year is one of transition where one will make attempts. We have a good tank of young, talented riders. I think of Alexis Gautier, Olivier Guillon, Julien Epailard, Édouard Mathé, Roger Yves Bost, Thierry and Philippe Rozier, Ludovic Leygue, even Nicolas Delmotte and World Cup finalist Philippe Léoni. They will find themselves being propelled to the forefront. They will be in La Baule on a purely individual basis (except Bruno Broucqsault, back to riding the stallion Hooligan de Rosyl, holder of the World Cup title which he will have gone to defend), and that will make it possible for everyone to see where they are. Five of them will represent France at the Mediterranean Games. They will mature while being immersed in competition at the high level. They will undoubtedly polish themselves with the Super League classes, even if I prefer to introduce a team at La Baule on the base of the SSL 2004, and not invent something. We will work on the Super League with the same seriousness as other years. I hope that things will arrange themselves during the season and that the French competitors here will do a very good competition. Morale is extremely important and mine has not yet started. However it is necessary to be realistic."*

Politically, if the situation is not yet completely stabilized (some elections must intervene in June to re-elect a president of the French Equestrian Federation, according to statutes conforming to ministerial directives), the FFE pursues its High Level policy and instituted new rules. Thus a Group 1 composed of 12 elite pairs that make up the 'fish pond' of international championships was born. Today, several of its members are isolated from events for various reasons mentioned above. The performances in La Baule of those who are in the 'waiting room' will constitute a walk of access to this Group 1 where all is played today. A new list will be announced by the National trainer a little after the end of the competition. *"Serge Lecomte has taken things in a good direction by naming Christian Paillot as the head of the high level group. In fact, and in spite of fears, it did not weaken the high level. We have not seen any deceleration of activity, even if this year things are rather more difficult for French showjumping because of problems mentioned above. The year will be hard, but rising to the challenge when one is impassioned by the high level, as it is in my case, is always interesting. If this job were easy, that would be known and it would not be funny!"*

Interview by Nathalie Fey.