

# JUMPING INTERNATIONAL DE LA BAULE OFFICIEL DE FRANCE June 8 to 11, 2023



PRESS RELEASE

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## La Baule about to overflow with excellence

Featuring the world number 1, three individual Olympic gold medallists, a constellation of world and European champions and winners of the most prestigious competitions in the world, three of the top 4 in the world rankings and a French delegation of 15 riders led by their best combinations, the Jumping International de La Baule — Officiel de France (8–11 June) boasts a star-studded line-up, with the promise of top-echelon sporting contests and a unique show.



The countdown has begun. It has even started to tick faster over the last few days, as the organisers take care of the final preparations and last-minute details to ensure the best conditions for all the movers and shakers, riders, horses, grooms, officials and partners, as well as laying the foundation for a show that will leave the entire audience in awe. The line-up for the 2023 edition of the Jumping International de La Baule — Officiel de France demonstrates once again the magnetic appeal of the show among the best riders in the world. From the opening round on Thursday to the Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule on Sunday, not to mention the Coupe des Nations Barrière, the Derby de la Région Pays de La Loire and the Prix Saur, the combinations will have to bring their A game to even hope to prevail over the fierce competition.

**France**, a ten-time champion of the Nations Cup stuck in a drought since 2017, is fielding its top aces in a bid to fill the François André Stadium in La Baule with the notes of *La Marseillaise* again. Out of the fifteen French riders who will compete in the CSIO5\*, the national coach, Henk Nooren, will have to choose the five combinations that will represent France in the Barrière Nations Cup (including one reserve). He will take his pick from among three Olympic gold medallists in the team event in Rio, **Roger-Yves Bost**, **Kevin Staut** and **Pénélope Leprévost**, as well as **François-Xavier Boudant**, **Grégory Cottard**, **Simon Delestre**, **Nicolas Delmotte** (the last French victor of the Grand Prix, back in 2021, on Urvoso du Roch), **Marc Dilasser** (who won in the World Cup this winter), **Julien Épaillard**, currently world number 2, **Julien Gonin**, **Cédric Hurel**, **Edward Lévy**, **Mégane Moissonnier**, **Olivier Perreau** and **Jeanne Sadran**. The Blue Jackets will face the cream of the crop of show jumping.

### **World number 1 Henrick von Eckermann steps into the fray**

**Henrik von Eckermann**, the world number 1, world champion in individual and team events last summer, winner of the last World Cup final, the Rolex Top 10 in Geneva last December, multiple five-star Grand Prix shows and, of course, a gold medallist in the team jumping event in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, will spearhead the **Swedish team**. He will find a key ally in **Jens Fredricson**, the runner-up in the Rolex Grand Prix of Rome a few days ago.

The reigning champions, **Belgium**, will be banking on **Jérôme Guéry** (world number 25), who clinched the 2016 Grand Prix de la Ville de La Baule on Grand Cru van de Rozenberg. **Gregory Wathelet**, **Nicola** and **Olivier Philippaerts** and **Wilm Vermeir**, all in the world top 60, complete a particularly well-rounded team.

### **Ben Maher (GBR), Steve Guerdat (SUI) and Rodrigo Pessoa (BRA), three individual Olympic gold medallists in La Baule**

Flying the flag for **Great Britain**, **Harry Charles** (world number 17) is perched at the top of the U25 world ranking and keen to dazzle on the track in La Baule where his father Peter used to shine, including a victory in the Derby in 2001. The British team will also field a premier line-up, with **Ben Maher** and **Scott Brash**, who took the Rolex Grand Slam in 2015 and was part of the gold-medal winning team (along with Ben Maher) in the 2012 Olympics. The team captain will have a mix of experience and youth at his disposal, with **Jody Hall McAteer** and **Joseph Stockdale**, both 23.

Having won two of the last three editions of the Nations Cup (2019 and 2021), **Switzerland** is a serious contender for the top step of the podium. Currently ranked number 4 in the world after a long stint in number 1, **Martin Fuchs**, the individual European champion in 2019, runner-up in the 2018 World Championships, winner of the 2022 World Cup and victor of the recent Rolex Grand Prix at the Royal Windsor Horse Show, will lead the Swiss charge. Fuchs, who will also enjoy watching his uncle Markus in the Platinum Sellier Legends' Trophy presented by Military Equestrian Sports, will have by his side the 2012 Olympic gold medallist and three-time winner of the World Cup final, **Steve Guerdat** (world number 22), as well as the young **Edouard Schmitz**, world number 36 (number 3 in the U25 standings), **Romain Duguet** and **Janika Sprunger**.

*Die Mannschaft* has what it takes to go back to its winning ways in La Baule, 16 years after its most recent victory. **Germany** will field **Gerrit Nieberg**, the breakthrough performer of last season, with a win in the legendary Rolex Grand Prix d'Aix-la-Chapelle. Last May, he proved it was no fluke with another triumph in Hamburg. The Germans, who are also bringing **Philipp Weishaupt**, **Richard Vogel** and **Kendra Claricia Brinkop**, are legitimate contenders.

Lacking any top 100 riders, but with seasoned competitors such as **Marc Houtzager**, who took the CSI4\* Grand Prix of Wiesbaden last weekend, and **Kevin Jochems**, the **Netherlands** are eager to defy the odds. Clad in the green jacket of **Ireland**, **Shane Breen** will be the leader of a team that will also have the battle-hardened **Cian O'Connor** on their side.

## Brazil and Japan versus Europe

Among the non-European nations, **Brazil** will also line up with its Olympic gold medallist, world champion and three-time World Cup winner **Rodrigo Pessoa**. Also boasting **Marlon Modolo Zanotelli** (world number 7) and **Yuri Mansur**, Brazil's number 2 and world number 39, **Eduardo Pereira de Menezes**, knocking on the door of the top 50, and **Stephan De Freitas Barcha**, third in the Rolex Grand Prix of Rome, the Brazilians look every bit the part and are legitimate contenders for the title they already won in 2018. Bang in the middle of their preparation for the 2024 Paris Olympics qualifier (held in the Dutch town of Valkenswaard in July), **Japan** will be keen to build up as much confidence as possible with **Mike Kawai**, a regular fixture in five-star contests.

## Beth Underhill (CAN) returns to defend her Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule title from last year

In addition to the combinations who come to represent their countries in the Coupe des Nations Barrière, several prominent competitors will also be present as individual riders in the François André Stadium, starting with the Canadian **Beth Underhill**, ready to defend the title she conquered last year. Austria's **Max Kühner**, Portugal's **Seabra Duarte** and Greece's **Ioli Mytilineou** recently turned heads in the Rolex Grand Prix at the Royal Windsor Horse Show by qualifying for the jump-off round. Luxembourg's **Victor Bettendorf** (number 27) has posted a months-long streak of consistent performances that included a win in the Saut Hermès in spring. **René López**, a Colombian who put down roots in France and won the Derby in 2018, will also join this big celebration along with Israel's number 1 and world number 14, **Daniel Bluman**, as well as the Mexican **Federico Fernández**.

The CSI1\* will also put on a spectacular show, with 65 riders taking part, giving the spectators the chance to enjoy the performances of riders who are delighted to ride on the same track as the international elite. One of them, Guillaume Canet, a familiar face in the Jumping International de La Baule, is making his comeback after 3 years.

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