



## Press Release

June 9, 2024

### The Americans land in La Baule

On completion of a competition of incredibly high standard, American Kent Farrington, riding his mare Greya, won the Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule, beating his young countryman Karl Cook in second place and Belgian Grégory Wathelet in third, in a finish that the audience and riders will remember for a long time.



Rarely has the use of superlatives seemed so opportune. The competitors in the **Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule**, the epilogue to four days of top-class competition at the François André stadium, put on a dazzling show. With a field of exceptional riders and horses, of which many are likely to shine during the forthcoming Olympic Games, the Grand Prix produced a moment of incredible intensity for this stage of the brand-new **Rolex Series** (in La Baule, Dinard, Rome, Brussels, Dublin and Wellington). At the end of the day, the result was an American one-two, which was a very symbolic occurrence so near to the anniversary of the D-Day landings. Fourteen years after **Mclain Ward**, who won in 2010 on **Sapphire**, **Kent Farrington** has become the second rider from the USA to write his name onto the roll of honour. He takes the crown from Belgian **Nicola Phillipaerts**, who triumphed last year with **Katanga v/h Dingshof**.

Eleven duos made it through to the jump-off after a highly selective but subtle first round designed by **Grégory Bodo**, who will be track superintendent this summer in Versailles for the Olympic Games (in partnership with Spaniard Santiago Varela). These eleven duos were made up of all the current stars: Swiss riders **Steve Guerdat** (world number 3), **Martin Fuchs** (number 6) and **Pius Schwizer**, Belgians **Grégory Wathelet** (number 24) and **Jérôme Guéry** (number 41), Austrian **Max Kühner** (number 5), Americans **Kent Farrington** (number 7) and **Karl Cook** (number 29), as well as **Kevin Staut** (number 20), the only French rider to qualify for this explosive final act. All were riding on their best horses.

When **Karl Cook**, who was second to start on his French mare **Caracole de la Roque**, completed his round in 34"21, seemingly flying over the jumps, most of the bets were on another success for the pupil of **Éric Navet**, two weeks after already winning the **Rolex Grand Prix in Rome**. However, **Kent Farrington**, on his ten-year-old mare **Greya**, took another 12 hundredths of a second off his countryman's time. Back in the paddock, the remaining riders realised that this time the bar had been set too high. With the Olympic Games just a few weeks away, many riders preferred to play 'safe' and not risk everything. As he watched from the paddock, 43-year-old **Kent Farrington**, a silver medallist in the team event at the Rio Olympic Games in 2016 (and 5<sup>th</sup> in the individual event), saw all his opponents come up short against his stratospheric time. *"I was very determined for the jump-off, of course, but to be honest, I always am,"* insisted the day's winner. *"Greya is a mare I've been riding since she was 4 or 5 years old, who went to Europe but then came back to my country when she was 6 years old. She's kind of my favourite. I have really taken my time to develop an understanding with her. I'm enjoying good results at the moment, but in our sport that can all change very quickly. You can go from hero to zero in the blink of an eye, but also from zero to hero. That's life. I just try to remain focused on my job. On the jump-off, I had a little look at what Karl had done, but I prefer not to be too influenced by what others do and stick to my basic plan. For the Olympic Games, we'll see once our team coach has made his decision, but I won't be going there just to make up the numbers. At this point in my career, I'll only be going if I have a chance of doing well".*

**Karl Cook**, in contention to be a part of the USA's team in Versailles this summer, inevitably made an impression on his national team coach **Robert Ridland**. *"When I finished, I knew I'd been quick, but I was also aware that we could have been a little bit quicker at some points,"* analysed 33-year-old Cook. *"In any case, with the riders and horses coming after me, it was all to play for. I just hoped I had put enough pressure on them to force them into making mistakes. Unfortunately for me, Kent was quicker. That said, I'm still very happy with this second place. My coach **Éric Navet** told me a lot about La Baule and all the memories he has of the place. It was important to do well for him too.*



*As for the Olympic Games, for the moment, I'm just trying to produce clear rounds and we'll see what happens".*

Belgian **Grégory Wathelet** with his formidable **Bond Jamesbond de Hay** took the last place on the podium with another clear round, but three seconds behind the American duo. *"I'm delighted with third place,"* he said. *"To be perfectly honest, it wasn't possible to equal Kent and Karl's times, all the more since the jump-off didn't suit the characteristics of my horse. The Olympics are just two months away and it was important to not do something silly".* The leading French rider, **Kevin Staut**, was a little further down in the rankings, in eleventh position on **Visconti du Telman** (with 8 points in the jump-off).

In the morning, in the **CSI 1\* Grand Prix Defender** (1.35 m), **Nicolas Cizeron** on his mare jument **Fragrance d'Elle** ensured the French national anthem La Marseillaise rang out, with the fastest of the eight clear rounds (out of 11 competitors in the jump-off). He beat Belgian **Jordy van Massenhove** on **Konita HX** and Frenchman **Killian Rouchvarger** on **Cardinal d'Ysieux Z**. Beforehand, **Anthony Boughaba Duplaix** on **Athika des Roches** had won the **CSI 1\* Prix Emma Pâtisserie** (1.20 m), in front of **Gabrielle Chabauty** (on Estrella Tardonne) and Swiss rider **Jasmine Talley** (on Metallica).



**"It was incredible!"**

**Pierre de Brissac (Chairman of the Jumping International de La Baule):** "The overview of this edition is naturally positive. Our team has been organising this event for four years now, and everything is now running smoothly. We have worked hard on communication and on the quality of the track with **Michel Poncelet** from **Green Consult**. We have also improved welcoming of stable hands, which is essential. The weather was also our best partner. I am very happy for the spectators and very happy for the French Federation of Equitation, because we are very attached to their *Officiel de France* label, the award of which was like winning our spurs. We are always trying to prove that we can do better to demonstrate that La Baule is worthy of the *Officiel de France* label. We have reached that standard and have met the expectations of the riders, who are all unanimous in their praise. For example, **Kent** (Farrington) and **Karl** (Cook) have just said "*What a show!*" to me! *We have worked for a year to provide four magnificent days of sport. We are still around maximum capacity in terms of crowds, but we have broken all our records for morning attendance. It was incredible! It is such a pleasure, for the riders, the horses, the stable hands, our partners and everyone who works to make this event a success*".



### Contacts Presse

Agence 15Love

Olivia Teboul : [olivia@15love.net](mailto:olivia@15love.net) - 0680106262

Juliette Rigault : [juliette.r@15love.net](mailto:juliette.r@15love.net) - 0634958960