

LONGINES EQUITA LYON

CONCOURS HIPPIQUE INTERNATIONAL

LYON
EUREXPO
1ST NOVEMBER
5TH NOVEMBER
2023

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PRESS RELEASE

FEI DRIVING WORLD CUP PRESENTED BY LAITERIE DE MONTAIGU: EXELL STILL AT THE TOP OF THE TABLE

Boyd Exell was the fastest of them all on Sunday in the international arena at the Longines Equita Lyon, Concours Hippique International, during the Lyon stage of the FEI Driving World Cup presented by Laiterie de Montaigu. This is the fourth time the world's number one driver has won in Lyon. It has almost become a habit; every time the sixteen hooves of the Australian's horses tread the track at Eurexpo Lyon, it seems victory is almost guaranteed. But it should be said that the seven drivers involved in this class had not come to just make up the numbers! They gave everything they had to try and beat Boyd Exell, who had already won Saturday's preparatory class.

Taking tight lines and turns, at full gallop, the drivers – representing five different countries – took every risk from the start of the very first round in order to qualify among the three best teams and make it into the "drive off", which is a sort of jump-off. Five of the starters managed to complete the course without making any mistakes. However, only the Belgian Dries Degrieck, the Dutchman Ijsbrand Chardon and the Australian Boyd Exell managed to record the times needed to go through to the second round.

The atmosphere was electric and the audience in full voice; the pressure went up a notch when the Belgian driver and his superb KWPN team entered the arena for second round, which was played out on the same course. He improved on his time of 168.10 seconds in the first run. However, while being faster, he was less precise, and the Belgian driver finally saw his time increased by an eight second penalty. His final score was 175.59. « I was already delighted to have made the top 3 today. I managed to go very fast in the first round. Yesterday, I took some turns that were a little too wide, so today I wanted to work on getting my turns tighter. It worked and I managed to qualify. But in the second round, the trajectories were a little less clear-cut. It just means I

needed to make a few minor adjustments, but I'm happy with my performance today," said the Belgian driver, who finished third in this World Cup event.

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After Dries Degrieck, it was time for the duel between Ijsbrand Chardon and Boyd Exell. And the Dutch driver did his utmost to push his Australian rival all the way, improving his first-round performance by more than 4 seconds, and posting a superb time of 168.62 seconds. "They are small horses, but they are extremely fast over the ground and that can make a difference

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indoors. I didn't have a choice, I had to try everything," explained the Dutch driver.

But despite his best efforts, Ijsbrand Chardon could not match Boyd Exell, who blew the Lyon crowd away with a dazzling display of driving. Even though the world champion was pushed to the limits and made a small mistake, adding a penalty of 4 seconds, his amazing time of 158.66 seconds (before the penalty) enabled him to outclass his rivals. "It's always an incredible feeling to win here. You can really feel the enthusiasm of the audience in Lyon. More and more people are following carriage driving. And they are really interested in it here in Lyon. They remember what we did the year before and they get right behind us. The atmosphere is unique and the organisation here is incredible," said Boyd Exell just after his victory.

As regards the French drivers, the team led by Benjamin Aillaud posted the best performance finishing 6th overall in this Lyon stage: "The horses are maturing and we're starting to get into the mix, but I want to focus on how getting the technique and feeling right with the horses rather than trying to just gain seconds. I'm more interested in the way the horses perform, and if they manage to put in a quick time, so much the better, but that's not my priority at the moment," said the French driver, who explained that he had only begun breaking in his Lusitano horses for carriage driving less than two years ago.

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