

# LONGINES EQUITA LYON CONCOURS HIPPIQUE INTERNATIONAL

LYON  
EUREXPO  
1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER  
5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER  
2023

LYON, RHÔNE  
5 NOVEMBER 2023

## LONGINES FEI WORLD CUP™ GRAND PRIX: GRÉGORY WATHELET SNATCHES VICTORY FROM JULIEN EPAILLARD

**What an amazing show! The Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping was a fitting way to round off the Longines Equita Lyon, Concours Hippique International on Sunday afternoon. After an intense jump-off involving 14 pairs, the Belgian rider Grégory Wathélet won this action-packed class on Bond Jamesbond de Hay, adding his name to the competition's list of winners and denying Julien Epailard his second title. The British rider Ben Maher took third place. And the French representatives can be happy with their performance, with four riders in the top 10.**

The 7,000 spectators who attended this event at Lyon-Eurexpo were treated to two rounds of a thrilling show put on by the world's best show-jumpers. With the top five riders in the world rankings and several Olympic and World Championship medal winners in the starting line-up, this Grand Prix promised to be a memorable event. The forty starting riders had to get through a course with 14 obstacles and requiring 17 turns of speed. The course was skilfully laid out by the design team headed up by the Frenchman Grégory Bodo, but also quite demanding, as François-Xavier Boudant noted ahead of the class: "It's a very tricky course where you start slowly, but then you have a series of distances to cover between the jumps, some where you are forward in the saddle, some where you are more backward. The triple just before the last obstacle is another difficulty".

### A STRONG CONTINGENT OF FEMALE RIDERS

The first rider to take to the arena in Lyon was Kevin Staut, the Rio Olympic team champion, riding Beau de Laubry. He came close to doing a clear round, but he made a mistake on obstacle No. 12 and thus bid farewell to the jump-off. Three pairs then went on to ride a clear round: Italy's Emanuele Gaudio with Crack Balou, Harry Charles (GBR) with Romeo 88 and Pieter Devos (BEL) with his young Jarina J, aged just nine. After that Brazil's Yuri Mansur and his stylish QH Alfons Santo Antonio flew over the obstacles, but failed to reach the jump-off by just nine hundredths. Then, the French hero of the Equita Masters presented by Hermès Sellier, Julien Gonin, could not prevent Valou du Lys from knocking off a bar coming out of the double No. 6. Nicolas Delmotte and Jordan Molga M, who was competing in his first CSI 5\* Grand Prix, also knocked off a bar coming out of the triple.

rode a great round with Dallas Vegas Batilly and joined his young compatriot in the jump-off.

And France finally earned its ticket to the jump-offs thanks to the great performance of two female riders: Pénélope Leprévost and Mégane Moissonnier, respectively riding their powerful horses Bingo del Tondou and Cordial. They were joined by Sweden's Wilma Hellström on Cicci BJN and Germany's Jana Wargers on Dorette, meaning four female riders qualified for the jump-off.

#EquitaLyon2023 #LonginesEquitaLyon #FEIWorldCup #RideToParis



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#### TWO OF THE FAVOURITES ABSENT FOR THE JUMP-OFF

Eight riders were qualified for the jump-off, when Julien Epailard entered the arena. The crowd held its breath when Dubai du Cèdre shifted sideways and touched the wall in obstacle No. 4 slightly. But the obstacle held firm and the pair rode the rest of the course without a hitch. That meant the fastest French rider would be in the jump-off and in a position to defend the crown he won last year with Donatello d'Auge. Switzerland also made it through, thanks to Martin Fuchs and Commissar Pezi. Afterwards, Simon Delestre and Dexter Fontenis Z's confirmed their excellent form by posting the tenth clear. Up next, the 2015 European champion, Grégory Wathelet, and Bond Jamesbond de Hay ensured Belgium had a second rider in the jump-off. Then, everyone thought two of the favourites for this Grand Prix would add their names to riders in the jump-off. However, both the Olympic champion and the reigning European champion made a small mistake with their bay horses, Iliana and Dynamix de Belhème, and did not make it through. François-Xavier Boudant and Brazil du Mezel, one of the revelations of the season, also put in a perfect performance. The last rider to start, Roger-Yves Bost, made light of the difficulties and rode a final clear round with Delph de Denat\*HDC.

#### A GREAT FRENCH PERFORMANCE

Fourteen pairs, from seven different countries, made it through to the jump-off against the clock, including six French participants. Looking at the qualifiers, it was quite obvious the final winner would need to be very quick around the course and not make any mistakes. Ben Maher, the world number 3, and his Selle Français (formerly ridden by Nicolas Delmotte) took the lead with a double clear round in 34"59. Jana Wargers managed to go quicker in 34"05 but made a mistake on the penultimate vertical in the colours of CWD. Equita Riders' Mégane Moissonnier completed another clear round to put herself in sixth place (38"07). Then, Julien Epailard entered the arena. As always, the rider from Normandy took plenty of risks. Even though the daughter of Baloubet du Rouet had a little trouble on oxer No. 16, the bars stayed in place and the pair competed a second clear round in 33"10. As often, everyone thought the match was over. But then Grégory Wathelet managed to knock the "speedy" Julien off the top spot. Drawing on the immense stride of his bay, the Belgian rider crossed the finish line in 32"93. Incredible! After that, Simon Delestre and François-Xavier Boudant tried their best to go faster, but knocked off the last and penultimate bars respectively. They finished seventh (34"01) and ninth (34"29). Another French hope, Bosty, made two mistakes and finished thirteenth. The last rider out in the jump-off was Pénélope Leprévost, but she and her horse had a mix-up and were ultimately eliminated.

At the end of this third stage of the Western European League of the Longines FEI World Cup™ circuit, Ireland's Richard Howley remains top of the provisional standings with 40 points. Germany's René Dittmer is in second place (30 pts). Simon Delestre, the top-ranked French rider, has climbed back up to third place (27 pts) following his second-place finish in the Oslo stage.

**Complete Results**  
**Provisional rankings for the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™**

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### WHAT THEY SAID

**Grégory Wathelet:** "Jump-offs are not yet my horse's strong point. We haven't taken part in many. But from the starting line, I felt that he wanted to give it a go and that he was really with me. So, I gave it my best shot. I'm proud of him. Basically, we're still getting to know each other. I've found out that he's more agile than I thought. So, we're gradually getting closer to what is really possible. The Grand Prix course was well designed, it was a good job. We know that the spectators in Lyon are incredible. From the very first event on the very first day, the stands were full. That motivates you to want to come here. Even if they're behind the French riders, we feel they cheer us on too, so that's why we're here. I think the next competitions we take part in will be in London and Mechelen. And then, of course, the final, if I manage to do enough stages to qualify."

**Julien Epailard:** "I'm really pleased with how Dubai performed. Since the European Championships, she has taken a step forward. She's becoming more and more consistent and finishing the season really well. My next objective is the Longines FEI World Cup™ Final. For the different stages, I'll be alternating between Dubai, Donatello and another mare I acquired recently. As for becoming world number 1, I'm really not thinking about that. October was a big month for me, with a lot of points to defend. I think I'll probably lose places rather than gain them."

**Ben Maher:** "I'm really pleased with my mare. I wanted to take a stride off between obstacles No. 1 and 2 but I didn't manage it, so it wasn't as smooth as I would have liked. I tried to go as quickly as possible, because I knew Julien was still to ride. But in the end, it was Grégory who proved to be unbeatable. Well done to him! Lyon really is one of the best competitions in the world, both in terms of the audience and the organisation."

**Sylvie Robert:** "Once again, we had some great sport at this year's Longines Equita Lyon. I would like to thank the FEI for their confidence. We have renewed our partnership for the World Cup™ circuit until 2027. So, the adventure continues. And we wouldn't be able to organise an event like this without the support of Longines. I'd also like to congratulate all the riders for the great show they put on. I also want to thank Grégory Bodo, who designed very 'horse-oriented' courses, which is essential for our sport. Finally, a big thank you to GL events and all my team for making everything run smoothly. We had great audiences throughout the five days. We could feel the incredible enthusiasm people have for our sport, and for sport in France in general, and that will drive us on to Paris 2024."

**Grégory Bodo:** "Today we had 14 clear rounds in a great show-jumping class. At this level, it's all about the details. The only thing we could have changed was the time. Initially we wanted to set the limit at 74 seconds rather than 75 seconds. That said, we saw a really great jump-off where the horses were able to express themselves without being overtaxed. What sticks most in my mind is the fact that we saw some really exciting action."

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