

Stockholm Hearts steal the show in sizzling GCL Ramatuelle / Saint-Tropez Round 1

The dream team pairing of Peder Fredricson and Malin Baryard-Johnsson secured Stockholm Hearts powered by H&M We Love Horses their second pole position of the season after turning up the heat in L'OPERA SAINT-TROPEZ GCL R1. The team fielded their top horsepower of Catch Me Not S and H&M Indiana to put them in the best position for Saturday's St Tropez showdown.

After a challenging GCL first round tested the world's best on the French Riviera which is just a short stroll from the turquoise waters of the famous Pampelonne Beach there were only 2 clean sheets. The picturesque show, which is nestled in the heart of the Cote D'Azur brought out the red carpet as VIPs and beautifully dressed guests flocked to the fifth event of the Championship.

Prague Lions duo of Pieter Devos and Niels Bruynseels also finished with a 0 score but in a slower time than the Stockholm Hearts while 5 teams sit just a pole behind them on 4 faults. Rome Gladiators' Edward Levy on Rebeca LS and Fernando Martinez Sommer with High Five stopped the clock 3 seconds faster than Stockholm Hearts but a single pole meant they had to settle for third after round 1.

Talking next to her teammate Malin Baryard-Johnsson smiled: "It was a great day for us, Indiana was quite wild yesterday in the warm-up and she was a little bit wild today as well but she's jumping her heart out and I'm super, super happy. This arena is a big difference from last week, the good thing it is that is a smaller ring so I have a little bit more control this week so it should help hopefully."

Current world number one Peder Fredricson added: "It's good we like to be in this position, we are really happy for the start we got today and we will do our very best on Saturday. It's the best position because it means you've done well, we like that. Of course, there is a bit of pressure and we really want to do well it's an important competition and we have all our friends here, the owners and the team owners and sponsors so we are really excited for Saturday."

Gregory Bodo's course took no prisoners, with a colourful triple combination set along the grandstand and towards home. A consistent rhythm and attacking pace looked to be the order of the day, with precision turns making all the difference in the long sand arena.

From the start, the world's best were tested as the fences came up thick and fast but the pathfinding Stockholm Hearts made it look easy. Straight from a huge grass arena in Madrid, H&M Indiana took the tighter arena all in her stride to deliver the first clear

much to the team owner's delight. Teammate Peder Fredricson and Catch Me Not S pulled out a brilliant clear, showing just why the Swedish rider has become such an important anchor for the bright red team putting pressure on the rest of the field.

A carefully managed clear from Niels Bruynseels and Delux van T & L for the Prague Lions and Pieter Devos on Mom's Toupie de la Roque put them in a strong position and feeling confident after gaining the only other double clear of the day.

On paper, the New York Empire looked like the ones to beat with on form U25 Harry Charles making his first appearance for the team. But Aralyn Blue showed her inexperience slightly knocking two fences on course to immediately bring the team total up to 8 faults. Scott Brash and Hello Shelby secured a fast clear round but it was too late and the team have a lot of work to do on Saturday.

Second in the championship, Hamburg Giants picked up 8 faults on the scoreboard from Linda Heed and Decurio before Simon Delestre and the uber consistent Hermes Ryan produced yet another clear keeping them on a tally of 8 overnight.

There was disappointment for current ranking leaders Berlin Eagles as they carry 9 faults over to GCL Saint Tropez R2. Making his team debut Eoin McMahon and Chakra 9 opted for a slow and steady clear picking up just one-time fault then team anchor Christian Kukuk and Checker had a very unusual two down.

Both London Knights and Paris Panthers were within touching distance of a double clear until the final fence fell for both Mike Kawai and Harrie Smolders putting both teams on the back foot and a score of 4.

So it would be the Hearts who take their second pole position of the season, with team managers now discussing strategy and tactics, and which pairing to play upfront on Saturday 21 May. The action kicks off at 14:15 local time, with the class streamed live via GCTV.