

Julien Épaillard speeds go home win on thrilling PremiuMares Prix at Ramatuelle/Saint-Tropez

Flying Frenchman Julien Epaillard and Donatello d'Auge triumphed on the second day of the Longines Global Champions Tour of Ramatuelle, Saint Tropez with a spectacular win in the CSI5* PremiuMares Prix.

As the sun began its slow descent over the world-famous Pampelonne Beach, the local speed merchant topped an 11 rider jump-off to take the win, just fractions of a second ahead of on form young talent Gilles Thomas and the striking black stallion Feromas van Beek Z. Reigning LGCT Champion Peder Fredricson and his Olympic Gold Medallist mount H&M All In secured third as first to go in the jump-off.

A proud Epaillard spoke after his win, "I am really happy, this is his first 1.50m class and only 9 years old. We bred this horse with my wife so I am very proud to see him like this. The horse is not super fast and I was not expecting this win today."

There was a distinctly cool Mediterranean vibe at the Longines Athina Onassis Horse Show, as fans and guests enjoyed the top sport as well as world-famous brands in the chic pop-up shopping village.

Poles rolled all around Gregory Bodo's course, with the world's best tested time and time again by French course designer skill. Riders needed foot-perfect precision in the treble, with many caught out by the final line.

First to go, last year's LGCT Grand Prix of Saint Tropez Champion Peder Fredricson showed once again why he is current world number one pulling out a class, tight and neat jump-off with H&M All In. At only his second show since the GC Prague Playoffs last year H&M All In made it look easy to stop the clock in 25.41s.

It wasn't to be for the first American in the jump-off, Spencer Smith and Untouchable 32, as attempted to rocket to the top by using their huge stride but two poles fell and it was a total of 8 faults and no podium today.

One after each other Julien Anquetin and Omer Karaevli both had to settle for four faults on the scoreboard after cheap rails fell for Z Ice Cube Z and Avant Toi respectively. Home hero Kevin Staut piloted 9-year-old Dialou Blue PS around the arena in style as spectators cheered when he pulled a clean round out of his hat, Dialou jumping his heart out for Staut.

There was drama when Jerome Guery had a run out at the second to last fence with Eras Ste Hermelle costing them the win and also picking up two-time faults.

There was heartbreak for Jessica Springsteen and her 2019 LGCT Grand Prix of Saint Tropez winner RMF Zecelie as they took all the risks coming agonisingly close to the time to beat but having to slip behind Peder by 0.1s. Fresh from his success in Madrid Gilles Thomas kept his cool to power around the track with Feromas van Beek Z shaving a second off Fredrcisons time to lay down the gauntlet at 34.49s.

Crowd favourite Roger Yves Bost had the perfect set up for tomorrow's Super Saturday with a flawless double clear on Delph de Denat but milliseconds off the pace to finish just outside the top 5 today. The temperature rose again as Julien Epailard knocked Thomas off the top spot with his homebred Donatello d'Auge after he galloped to the last stopping the clock in 34.35s on home turf.

Final rider to go Harrie Smolders took an inspired turn back to the double but the pressure from de Epailard's time was too much - forcing an error as a pole fell. So the speedy Julien Epailard would claim the PremiuMares Prix with Donatello d'Auge, the pair taking the spotlight as they were presented the trophy.

Tomorrow will see the GCL of St Tropez R2 which kicks off at 14:15 local time, and the Longines Global Champions Tour Grand Prix of Saint Tropez which takes place at 17:45. All the action will be streamed live via GCTV, with expert commentary, analysis and exclusive guest interviews.