

MALIN BERYARD-JOHNSON SHINES IN SAINT-TROPEZ TO TAKE LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR GRAND PRIX WIN

Sweden's Malin Baryard-Johnsson and H&M Indiana took a sensational second LGCT Grand Prix win following a breathtaking jump-off in the Longines Global Champions Tour Grand Prix of Ramatuelle, Saint Tropez. The fight for the 2022 title has intensified after Pieter Devos' double clear sees him regain the overall ranking lead.

Just like in 2019 in St Tropez, Devos takes the coveted leader's armband as the Championship race heads to Hamburg, where he now leads with 110 points overall. Young talent Gilles Thomas sits just behind in second, with 101 points, and long-time leader Ludger Beerbaum and his trainee Christian Kukuk are now third with 99 points overall.

A delighted Malin spoke of her special horse; "I am so proud, I am so happy, H&M Indiana is just amazing. Every win is emotional but having everyone here today behind me makes me even happier if that is possible! I had to take risks because the ones before me were really fast but I had my really good coach with me Marlon Zanotelli who was there with me in Rome as well when I won and he really pushed me. And we did it."

Talking about her qualification for the Longines Global Champions Tour Super Grand Prix she smiled: "I would like to win a few more but I am really happy there is already three girls qualified for the Super Grand Prix out of five which is a great number."

The first event of the season on the French Riviera delivered a dazzling Mediterranean experience for spectators and fans watching live around the world. Situated metres from the famous Pampelonne Beach at Ramatuelle/Saint-Tropez, the event was an exhilarating mix of top sport and Riviera lifestyle with global brands from Longines to Bentley, Dolce & Gabbana and Hermès on site. The lively atmosphere in the stylish hospitality and cocktail lounges around the sand arena created a unique atmosphere with a cool Saint Tropez vibe.

It was a LGCT Grand Prix with top riders from start to finish delivering a supreme display to show jumping fans worldwide. Gregory Bodo's testing course demanded perfection and no room for error with a challenging Longines triple combination, plus a tricky double that fell at the lightest of touches.

But there were success stories as the clear rounds mounted up with 12 world-class combinations making it through to the intense jump-off.

First to light up the jump-off, Jeanne Sadran in her first-ever LGCT Grand Prix jump-off was swift over the early part of the course but it started to get a bit sticky and the pair finished with 16 faults overall.

Next up, Pieter Devos fighting for the Championship lead, a golden ticket to Prague and the win he was clear and quick with Mom's Toupie de la Roque to throw down the gauntlet in 36.77s.

Then one after another the lead kept changing by fractions of a second. Jérôme Guery and Grupo Prom Diego were superbly fast stopping the clock in 36.08s. They didn't stay in the lead for long as compatriot Abdel Said punched the air and let out a huge cheer revving the crowd up as he crossed the finish line in 35.62s.

Just when spectators didn't think it could get any faster temperatures soared when Spencer Smith and his 2021 LGCT Grand Prix winning horse Theodore Manciais shifted up a gear with fantastic tight turns to make up time, throwing everything at the last line to claim the lead for now in 35.35s.

Both Niels Bruynseels and Christian Ahlmann each had two rails down collecting 8 faults and pushing them down the order.

A danger to Smith's lead Harrie Smolders and Monaco set off to a flying start. They made up the ground in between, propelling them into the lead in 35.09s but a win was not guaranteed with some of the biggest names in the sport still to go.

Christian Kukuk and Checker had an agonising fault at the first fence immediately putting him out of contention for the win and handing the lead in the Championship to Devos.

Attempting to make it back to back Swedish winners in St Tropez, Malin Baryard-Johnsson took on the challenge with a lightning-fast start to the jump-off with H&M Indiana. They hit the accelerator to go flat out to the last leaving spectators on the edge of their seats as to whether they'd clear it. Showing their scope and talent they galloped clear in 34.71s to whoops of sheer delight from the whole H&M team and owners.

It was clear from the start that Annika Axelsson was opting for a steady double clear on Cleo Z ruling herself out of contention for the win but collecting valuable prize money.

Kevin Staut was unbalanced with a spook early on in the course costing them vital seconds and they delivered a clear as all eyes were on the clock but it wasn't enough as it stopped in 36.82 and the home hero finished outside the top 5.



So it would be Malin Baryard-Johnsson who sparkled in Saint-Tropez and earned her place in the Longines Global Champions Tour Super Grand Prix. The thrilling Championship race now heads to Hamburg, Germany for the sixth leg of the season!

LONGINES ATHINA ONASSIS HORSE SHOW

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