



63rd CONCOURS HIPPIQUE INTERNATIONAL DE GENÈVE

11th to 15th DECEMBER 2024

PRESS RELEASE

A WELL-DESERVED WIN FOR HARRIE SMOLDERS AND MONACO

Geneva, 15 December 2024 – What excitement this year! The Rolex Grand Prix of Geneva 2024 will undoubtedly be a highlight in the long history of this unique CHI tournament. And in the end, this prestigious award went to a pair who deserves to be in the spotlight for the first time. Harrie Smolders and Monaco won their first major Grand Prix, rewarding themselves for their extraordinary consistency over the past few years.

In the last four years, the Dutchman and his incredible 15-year-old bay stallion have finished second in a 5* Grand Prix no less than ten times, including at Bois-Le-Duc in 2022 and in London and Geneva in 2021. Now he has finally added a prestigious win to his impressive list of achievements. And in style.

There were 40 riders at the start line this afternoon, all highly motivated to make their mark on the final stage of this year's Rolex Grand Slam of Show Jumping. Each rider had prepared their best horse for the occasion. The Rolex Grand Prix of Geneva is the culmination of an eventful 2024, and for many riders it is the last competition they can tick off their calendar before taking a few days off to rest and start a new cycle in 2025. It goes without saying that Gérard Lachat and Grégory Bodo, the duo responsible for designing this GP, had to create a very selective course to ensure that only the crème de la crème would make it to the jump-off. They rose to the challenge with flying colours, as only ten duos managed the coveted clear round.

Harrie Smolders was the first to start in a jump-off that required both short turns and good speed. The 44-year-old set the bar high from the outset, relying on his faithful Monaco to master the tight and risky turns. His rivals struggled to find the key to success. Martin Fuchs and Leone Jei, who were so successful this weekend, missed out on the jump-off with two faults, as did Ben Maher on Point Break, who had one down at the jump-off of the double. After the first five pairs, it was clear to everyone that it was going to be very difficult and it would take a miracle to knock Harrie Smolders and Monaco off their pedestal.

Two underdogs had a better chance of a place on the podium. The surprise was the Italian Giulia Martinengo Marquet with her fantastic Delta Del'Isle. The pair, who had already impressed in the first round, once again demonstrated their teamwork and control in the jump-off and also remained clear in the second round. Third place went to the young Belgian rider Gilles Thomas with Ermitage Kalone, who also remained clear in the jump-off. Now there were only two riders left who could pose a threat to Harrie Smolders. Peder Fredricson and his experienced Catch Me Not S were unlucky at the Oxer of the Pont des Arts de Paris. And finally, American rider McLain Ward with Ilex, who, as everyone knows, is very fast! Today was no exception, as he was the only one to beat the best time... But the pole came down at the last Rolex design vertical! This meant that the Rolex Grand Prix of Geneva was won for the second year in a row by the rider who went first into the jump-off – and deservedly so.



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What the protagonists said

Harrie Smolders: Starting first is never easy because the level is very high and everyone can see you and copy you or adapt their own strategy. I risked everything without any tactical planning, and I really wasn't sure if it would be enough today. I am fair and always congratulate my rivals first when they win, but I think Monaco really deserved this victory. After so many second places it is only right to be at the front.

Giulia Martinengo Marquet: This was without a doubt the most difficult competition I have ever done, especially with this horse. I was very nervous because the weekend hadn't gone as well as I had hoped, but Delta deserved that I found the right amount of courage today. I have always dreamed of coming to Geneva, so this result means a lot to me. My team and my horse deserve it, I couldn't be happier. Delta is definitely the star of the day and I think I now understand how much a horse can change your life and your career.

Gilles Thomas: Last year we had many offers to buy Ermitage and it was a risk not to sell him. This third place is the reward for our risk and I am very happy for his owners and for him. For my part, I am very proud because it was very difficult, and this result is a great achievement. We don't have enough experience to be fast with Ermitage, I knew I couldn't beat Harrie, but maybe I was hoping to catch up with Giulia!

Boyd Exell regains the crown at Palexpo

Yesterday's competition served to determine the starting order for the fifth stage of the FEI World Cup Driving. Starting in the reverse order of the previous day's classification, the best drivers had the advantage of observing their competitors and identifying any pitfalls or difficult elements. After the first round, only the top three qualified for the drive-off. The battle between the leader of the discipline, the Australian Boyd Exell, seven-time World Champion and ten-time World Cup final winner, Bram Chardon, the defending champion of Geneva and three-time World Cup final winner, and the Swiss Jérôme Voutaz, the local hero at Palexpo, promised to be an exciting one. In an incredible atmosphere, supported by an enthusiastic audience, they gave their all, combining finesse, strength, speed and agility. After a beautiful performance by the Swiss leader with 166.18 points, Bram Chardon put the Australian under pressure with a perfect round of 161.17 points. But despite a solid performance from the defending champion, the Australian managed to step it up a notch to win with 155.66!

What the actors said:

Boyd Exell: I have to congratulate the course designer, Michael Mayer, because it was his first time designing a World Cup course. In the end the gap between us was very small and it would be nice to have more drivers in the field to make the competition even tougher.

Bram Chardon: I have two new horses in my team and yesterday I had some difficulties, not everything went as I had hoped. But I made up for it today. I didn't dare to take full risks yet, but the potential is there and we'll be able to improve before the World Cup final.

Jérôme Voutaz: I'm glad I didn't finish fourth! (laughs) I made some changes to the bits for the horses and we also worked with the grooms on the carriage, which I had neglected before, and it paid off.

Michael Mayer, course designer: This was my first course at World Cup level. I have been here before, but as a first assistant. Geneva is a very big arena and I hope that I can make the course elements even more fluid.



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CHI Geneva sets a new record

In addition to the undeniable sporting success of this 63rd edition of CHI Geneva, which was marked above all by the repeated victories of Martin Fuchs and the crowning of the Dutchman Harrie Smolders with the prestigious trophy in show jumping, the record number of visitors to CHI Geneva should not go unmentioned. Sophie Mottu Morel, Show Director: "This is of course a very positive result, as we welcomed 48,000 visitors during the five days of the show, which is a record! Four of the five sessions were sold out before CHI Geneva even started, which is very gratifying. I would like to congratulate and thank all our technical teams and the many volunteers who contribute to the special atmosphere of our event. I would also like to thank the riders and their horses for the great sporting moments they experienced this weekend."

Information for the media

For any further information, please contact our press officer, Corinne Druey, on + 41 21 312 82 22.



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