

LONGINES FEI WORLD CUP™ 2014/2015 JUMPING SEASON

TEXT BY: KIM LUNDIN

The happiest winner of all times? It is hard to measure but Steve Guerdat's yearning for a World Cup title has been public knowledge for several years. He has been on the very threshold of his gates to heaven only to stumble at the entry and see them close before him. Not this year, not in Las Vegas. With the young super trooper mare Albführens Paille he literally crossed every obstacle to reach that much coveted trophy; his very own victory by pure will. "I rode like a cowboy," said a relieved winner, not meant as a self-compliment. The 37th Final was to return to US soil after six years in other countries. Let's take a stroll through the worldwide series that from 15 leagues produced 42 finalists from all over the globe.

OVER 80 RIDERS IN ARAB LEAGUE

Three riders dominated the league and ventured westbound for Vegas in April. Overall winner of the 13-leg long Arab League was Abdullah Al Sharbatly, claiming two victories and four second places during the season. He was joined by company from Qatar for the Final in Vegas. Runner-up in the league was Bassem Hassan Mohammed with his 13-year-old mare Victoria, Dutch-bred by Tangelo vd Zuuthoeve. Who is also famous as the rider of the presumed; most expensive jumping horse ever: Palloubet d'Halong. Third placed Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani mainly competed his two 10-year-old horses in the league over winter. Top-100-ranked Vienna Olympic, a Holsteiner mare by Cassini I-Contender, and First Devison, a BWP-gelding by Andiamo that would be his partner in the Final.

EASTERN MAGIC

Latvian rider Andrius Petrovas gathered the most points in the Central European League, northern sub-league, but stopped competing already in November 2014. He still managed to end up with 102 points well ahead of Michal Kazmierczak, Andis Varna and Kristaps Neretnieks. Andis Varna and Kristaps Neretnieks, both Latvian riders, filled the quota together with Russian athlete Vladimir Beletskiy. Neretnieks is by now a seasoned finalist doing his third Final in Vegas, still he took the inexperienced Romanee Cece, a 10-year-old mare doing her fifth international show, to Vegas, finding the courses hard. Andis Varna took 8-year-old KS Coradina through to Las Vegas.

HOPING FOR A HOME RUN

The North American riders in the West and East Coast leagues were more than geared up for a Final on home soil. With Rich Fellers claiming the title in 2012 and Beezie Madden in 2013, Lyon was just a bump in the road. Las Vegas was it, imagine the crowd in Thomas & Mack Center if a rider for the home team would win, everyone was dreaming about it. The East Coast line-up at Las Vegas was star-studded to say the least; Todd Minikus joined by Beijing Olympic team gold medallist Laura Kraut and 2013 FEI World Cup™ Jumping Champion Beezie Madden along with Jack Towell, Kirsten Coe, McLain Ward and Katie Dinan. The West Coast league only has three spots but filled them with Rich Fellers, young gun Karl Cook and Vinton Karrasch as Susan Artes withdrew after her horse Zamiro got an injury. To complete the team young Lucy Davis with her Barron came in on the extra spots granted for foreign riders competing in the Western European league.

DUTCH DYNAMO DEBUT

Course designer Uliano Vezzani set a tough track in the tight confines of Oslo's Telenor Arena in the first leg of the Western European World Cup league. Nine combinations made it to the jump-off after a first



Photo: Arnd Bronkhorst

Steve Guerdat finally took his World Cup title, but maybe not in the way he wanted.

round where poles had been dropping left, right and centre. Any rider who is up against Nino de Buissonnets, Steve Guerdat's über-fast gelding with reflexes as quicksilver, know they need to be fast. Guerdat and Nino cleared the course with sharp turns easy going in 35.22 seconds, 1.5 seconds faster than Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum on the promising Fibonacci, her new Swedish-bred mount. Jur Vrieling made his first World Cup start with the approved stallion Zirocco Blue, by Mr Blue. That was not going to deter Vrieling from trying, especially not after good hints from Piet Raymakers. "Piet told me to take seven strides to the double and five to the last fence and that then I could win it. He said he was sure my horse could do it," stated the winning Dutchman. The alteration saved him a stride and a second, beating Guerdat's time. Though four riders were left, only the last one proved to be dangerous for Vrieling. Marco Kutscher with Cornet's Cristallo took six strides to the final line and squeezed in between Vrieling and Guerdat as runner-up.

A VERSATILE SWISS ARMY

As the 30th Helsinki Horse Show moved to the Helsingin Jäähalli, the city's oldest indoor ice rink, course designer, Frenchman Frederic Cottier, had to be at his creative best. All riders enjoyed the atmosphere from 7000 spectators and adjusted their riding; you had to stick with your plan as all fences came up faster and tighter. With fifteen riders in the jump-off the audience had a field day as for entertainment. First Swiss private to make a mark was Pius Schwizer. He took the lead with his eight-year-old Sixtine de Vains, a mare by Calvaro Z-Damoiseau d'Or, who stopped the clock on 35.33 after Pius had taken fewer strides between fences early on the course. They finished third on what would be their last competition together; she is now named Sarena, owned by Jane Forbes Clark and competed by Ben Maher. Jur Vrieling proved that he and Zirocco Blue VDL really like it indoors; they made it into fourth place with 35.78. Steve Guerdat was in the ring to win, Nino des Buissonnets was the perfect horse for the tight arena and locked down the victory with 34.96. When Guerdat's friend and fellow countryman Martin Fuchs with PSG Future made a clear round in 35.10 it was Swiss bliss all over the arena.

FRENCH BOOST BY BOSTY

In late autumn the World Cup returned to the great city that hosted the Final in spring – the French gem called Lyon. As in the Final, Frank Rothenberger was the course designer with a road map that delivered 14 combinations in an exciting jump-off. Fittingly it came down to a French winner. "It's a very special thing to happen on the 20th anniversary of our show," said Show Director Sylvie Robert. The battle gave a top three with experienced riders, two of them on stallions. Winning combination Roger-Yves Bost and his stallion Qoud'Coeur De La Loge, born in 2004 by Ideal de La Loge and linebred on Jalisco B,



Juan Carlos Capelli VP & Head of International Marketing Longines, runner up Pénélope Leprévost, Ingmar Vos FEI President, winner Steve Guerdat, 3rd place was for Betram Allen.

Photos: Hippo Foto/Dirk Caremans

Nankin and Alme Z, were accompanied by 'Allez allez allez' from the audience. 'Bosty' was successful with the father Ideal de La Loge and sensed the similarities, still stating that the son is both easier and better. Runner-up was Wout-Jan van der Schans with the Oklund-offspring Capetown. German black gold Embassy II took the third place with his constant rider Hans-Dieter Dreher.

IRISH LAD WITH A BLONDE FAIRY

It was his first time in a World Cup qualifier though he already placed 7th individually at the WEG just three months shy of the showdown in Verona. The young gun Bertram Allen, 19 years old, and his phenomenal magic beauty of a white mare Molly Malone V used their WC-debut well, by quite simply winning easily. They did it by clear rounds at an impressive pace. Course designer was Italy's Uliano Vezzani, ten combinations qualified for the second round where six jumped double clear rounds. The competition for young Allen was fierce, the leg attracted 6 of the top 7, and 13 of the top 19 riders in the latest Longines World Rankings including Olympic Champion Steve Guerdat from Switzerland. He took them all, even his trainer Marcus Ehning with Cornado NRW, finishing third taking his first points. "I'm quite proud that I could help him a few steps on his way, we have been working together now for a few years and we have a good relationship," stated Ehning. Maikel van der Vleuten took the runner-up position with stallion VDL Groep Verdi TN N.O.P. "If I compare my round to Bertram's he had a quicker turn to second-last jump, for the rest I was really happy with the way my round went," Van der Vleuten commented, pleased with his first 17 points for the season.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

Late November and the young riders on the tour keep climbing to fame. With uncles like John and Michael Whitaker you are surrounded by amazing role models from an early age. The Whitakers are a dynasty, of horsemanship and jumping royalty. In Stuttgart on course designer Luc Musette's challenging round it was time for future of the clan to make

**“IT WAS AN AMAZING FINAL,
THRILLING ALL THE WAY TO
THE VERY END. ”**

**– SVEN HOLMBERG,
FEI-JUDGE**

a mark. 26-year-old William Whitaker with Swedish-bred Fandango, owned by his fiancée Elisabeth Fredlund, made the tricky course look easy. So did American Lucy Davis on her Barron, both started early in the class. Davis was part of the bronze team at the WEG in Normandy with formidable Barron, she was very fast in the jump-off. William was next up. “I didn’t see Lucy go, but Michael said she was quick. I had my plan already made for what I had to do anyway, and my horse tried his best – I knew I was going fast!” he concluded. When you have “SteNino”, aka Steve Guerdat and Nino des Buissonnets, in the start list behind you, there is no such thing as too fast. “I wanted to win because I’ve finished second here at Stuttgart three times so it would mean a lot! But the jump-off didn’t suit my horse – I had to add a stride between the second and third fences, and again coming down to the last fence so I lost time there,” Guerdat explained finishing third.

COLOMBIAN DREAM COME TRUE

Madrid was the scene in late November and a new group of riders got their hands on points as the World Cup made its first ever stop in the Spanish capital. The 49-year-old Carlos Lopez was fourth to go in the electrifying 11-horse jump-off. His recent success was an 18th place individually at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games™ 2014 in Normandy, together with Prince de la Mare. This was his partner in Madrid as well, a then 11-year-old SF-gelding by Bequin de Moens --Socrate de Chivre. “No, I didn’t think I would win, I thought I might be in the first three because I didn’t start too fast and I had a problem with the hackamore on the turn to fence seven so I knew I had to gallop from there! That’s the sport, sometimes you are lucky, sometimes not, and little things make a big difference,” said Lopez enjoying the moment. Edwina Tops-Alexander took the runner-up position with Lintea Tequila, just a fraction ahead of third placed Alexandre Fontanelle on Prime Time des Vagues.

GERMAN MISTLETOE IN LONDON

Some venues have to work hard to attract riders, not London Olympia two weeks before Christmas. Everyone from riders, trainers, and officials to the audience loves the show. Course designer this year was Ireland’s Alan Wade and his course made 13 qualified for the second-round jump-off against the clock. There could have been a few more if the time had not been so sharp, three combinations picked up just a single time fault in the first round. With five left to run, Daniel Deusser took command with the 11-year-old mare Carriere who cleared the jump-off course in 38.44 seconds, a short-lived lead. Teammate Marco Kutscher galloped through the timers in 37.66 seconds with some difficulties at the double at 9. “The beginning of the jump-off wasn’t perfect and I wanted to do one less stride to the double but Cornet’s Cristallo was a bit behind me – he really helped me there. I was very deep, very close – but he made it!” Kutscher stated, happy with a win after a less than fortunate London weekend. In the

whole cadre of clears four German riders qualified for the jump-off, two landing on unbeatable time with more than a second to third-placed Swede Malin Baryard-Johnsson with approved stallion H&M Tornesch.

FRENCH FLAVORS IN MECHELEN

The Belgian show Mechelen is a superb New Year’s party for equestrian enthusiasts offering everything on one plate. The leg would this year go to a good neighbour with French team rider Simon Delestre on Qlassic Bois Margot followed by the Brit Joe Clee. Course designer Lucien Somers prepared a tough test where the triple combination towards the end demanded a full tank from the horses. Out of 39 starters only nine made it to the jump-off that produced four double-clear rounds. Joe Clee with the stallion Utamaro d’Ecaussines, son-in-law to the late Eric Wauters, went first and set a strong mark in a quick clear round. Sweden’s latest addition to the top circus Douglas Lindelöw and Casello rode a cautious but clear round that paid off with a third place, their season best so far. The 25-year-old rider swore to himself to make it to Las Vegas when he was stood up for the national team to the WEG. In Mechelen he added 15 points to his 14 and took a step closer to the ticket counter. “It was a good jump-off track for my horse, we could take one stride out in every line and he’s always very quick, but I was sure to be careful because twice before in the qualifiers this season I have been really fast but picked up four faults!” said Simon Delestre. He would later in the season back away from the Final, judging it to be too much for the 11-year-old Qlassic Bois Margot, a popular breeding stallion, an saving his Ryan des Hayettes for an outdoor season.



Photo: Remmo Veurink

Pénélope Leprévost rode a wonderful and sympathetic World Cup Final to finish runner-up aboard Vagabond de la Pomme.

GERMAN PRIDE AND JOY IN LEIPZIG

In front of a home crowd Hans-Dieter Dreher and the beautiful stallion Embassy II took on Frank Rothenberger's big and bold course like child's play, with more than a 1.5 seconds margin to the runner-up. The big arena in Leipzig is almost as an outdoor ring in size, the course was uncomplicated but took its toll, only 5 out of 40 starters made it to the jump-off and as many as seven retired. Dreher had a third place from Lyon and a single point from Stuttgart so his motivation was right up there. The same could be said about runner-up Geir Gulliksen on Edesa S Banjan and third-placed Luca Maria Moneta with Connery. Moneta set out first and managed a clear round, Gulliksen bettered the time slightly with another clear. Home rider Felix Hassman and Sweden's Douglas Lindelöw both had two fences down leaving last starter Dreher in an envious position. With Embassy II following his every instruction they sailed through the jump-off, saving fractions in several lines, clear and in perfect timing. "I love this horse – he has such a big heart!" said Dreher.

SPANISH MOJO BACK ON SWISS SOIL

The World Cup went to Longines' home country with a strong list of contenders as the legs left were disappearing in record speed. Zurich is always putting on a splendid show and course designer Gerard Lachat assisted by Rolf Lüdi made a challenging very technical task for the riders that only seven managed to complete without faults. The Spanish winner Sergio Alvarez Moya with his super trooper Carlo 273 did indeed have a wobbly first round but made it, feeling enormous relief. "I've been having a bad time for a while now, not so lucky here and there with four faults all the time, but it just paid off today and I can't be happier!" was Sergio Alvarez Moya's verdict. On the other hand third-placed Rolf-Göran Bengtsson with Casall Ask made the course look like a walk in the park. Runner-up was a young gun on a grey mare that secured their ticket to Las Vegas. Bertram Allen and Molly Malone V always are in their best element in the jump-off, they took the lead with 39.48. Bengtsson tried his best but was over a second slower. Moya and Carlo proved themselves to be the very best of the day, losing a stride compared to Allen ahead of the last fence thus saving enough fractions to beat the time. Looking like one unit yet again, Moya and Carlo got their mojo back and 20 points to go.

“THE FENCES WERE ALMOST ON TOP OF THE CROWD, WE ARE USED TO EXTREMES IN OUR SPORT BUT THIS WAS REALLY EXTREME!”

– BERTRAM ALLEN

IRISH CLARET IN BORDEAUX

If anyone at this stage looked at Bertram Allen as a one-horse-winner, meaning Molly Malone V was doing all the magic on the course – Bordeaux was the show where the young Irish lad showed everyone the ropes. Over Uliano Vezzani's course he rode 17-year-old Romanov, a former partner of fellow Irishman Billy Twomey. The course produced



Simon Delestre on Qlassic Bois Margot won the qualifier of the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping in Mechelen.

eleven clear rounds but only four managed a double clear. Ludger Beerbaum on Chaman was runner-up and paid tribute to Allen stating that he could not have beaten him on speed. Third-placed Marcus Ehning was really pleased as he reached a top placing with a future prospect in Maria Gretzer's stallion Singular LS La Silla. "I knew I was in with a chance, and I just kind of set sail down the last! He's a brave horse with a lot of experience," Allen said. "There is a super atmosphere here in Bordeaux; it's one of the best shows on the circuit. I'm delighted. When you are one of the last ones to go at the jump-off and manage to get away with it, it's a great feeling!" Course designer Uliano Vezzani had the final word when putting the result into context. "I'm very happy," he said, "because Bertram is the future..." Two months down the line the whole world would agree.

SWISS DRESS REHEARSAL IN SWEDEN

Gothenburg was the last battle and a high quality leg, seven of the top ten riders in the Longines rankings participated. The sideline experts had written off Steve Guerdat as he brought the 12-year-old mare Albführen's Paille to the show known for ambience, loud crowds and a narrow arena. Little did they know? Course designer, Spain's Santiago Varela, set up a difficult track but 13 of the 39 starters made clear rounds. Guerdat went into the jump-off as number four, always tricky to go so early, but Paille lowered her head and galloped home with a clear round and a time four seconds faster of 43.13. To the roar of the home crowd Casall Ask and Swedish hero Rolf-Göran Bengtsson made a clear jump-off but slower. It would still hold though as third-placed Marco Kutscher with Cornet's Cristallo tried for fewer strides but had to change his mind on course costing valuable fractions. Kevin Staut participated in all the legs gathering points from placings in most of them without doing top three. In Gothenburg he had the chance and Silvana HDC jumped so well, when the last oxer fell the audience sighed with him. Still, Kevin placed 7th and had his route to Vegas paved with 65 points. Winning Steve Guerdat had only praise for his 12-year-old mare. "Paille arrived at my stables 10 months ago. It took a while to get to know her, but she jumped clear in her very first Grand Prix and this is her first very big win with me." First but not last.



Ireland's Bertram Allen saw off some of the world's top equestrian stars to win his second World Cup competition in Bordeaux.

BACK IN LAS VEGAS

The World Cup Final returning to Las Vegas for the first time since 2009 was a real party. What comes to mind is that kind of excitement and enthusiasm so well portrayed in Baz Luhrmann's movie *Moulin Rouge* where the cast sets up a musical called 'Spectacular Spectacular'. Vegas will forever stand for a lot of showmanship in combination with very tough challenges in the arena. It looked almost impossible for some riders and horses but for the third of the combinations that succeeded it was easy. It was exactly as it should be; the Final rounds will sift the wheat from the chaff.

SLOW CLIMBERS

This year's World Cup Final was an exciting and game-changing meeting for several of the well-established top riders that did not succeed at all. There were slowly climbing stars like Beezie Madden, eventually in fourth place with Simon, her title partner in the 2013 Final in Gothenburg. They had a rail down in round B of Final III, performing stellar in Final II being one out six clears, making the whole difficult and challenging course look easy. "I have a fantastic team behind me and I'm so happy with the way my horse went. One rail down cost me a lot but it's been a fantastic week. I want to thank Las Vegas and Longines because we've all had a great time," said the Final's best American rider. One of the World Cup rookies Swedish Douglas Lindelöw with Casello was one of these slow climbers, 17th after Final I, then 12th and finally an incredible 8th place for the soon to be 25-year-old rider. Steve Guerdat's way to victory with 12-year-old Kannan-daughter Albführen's Paille was straightforward and safe, a fifth place in the Final I speed class. A new flawless round and victory in Final II placed him along with American hope Rich Fellers in the coveted position of having zero faults going into Final III. Fellers sent the Thomas & Mack Center to a boiling point when he and his 19-year-old Flexible finished second in Final I, got a deep sigh from the whole

arena when they had a rail down and came fourth in Final II. In Final III the demanding course took its toll and the little Cruising-fighter had two rails down but still finished seventh in his last World Cup. It was an amazing result for the winner from 's-Hertogenbosch in 2012.

LONG TIME COMING

Steve Guerdat, however, did everything right in the Final IIIs round A where only six managed to perform clear rounds. When he went out as the last competitor in round B, it was with zero faults, both Pénélope Leprévost and Bertram Allen had 9 faults. Steve had everything going for him, he could have two fences down but what he dreaded most was a time fault and that comes down to his personal track record in World Cup Finals. "I've been three times on the podium, twice in the jump-off and always finished in the top 10. I always wanted to win this," Guerdat said. When he went into round B things changed very rapidly when Steve and Paille had a fault already at fence number 5a, the oxer going in to the combination. "I didn't expect the first mistake, those four strides turned out to be very, very long, and that triple combination wasn't good for me at all, but once we were past that I thought now stay calm. But coming to the last I knew the time was tight. I could hear Martin Fuchs outside the arena saying 'go, go!' and I don't know what I did. I just went as fast as I could to the finish line, but unfortunately there was a big fence in the way!" he said relating to himself riding cowboy-style.

THE BEST HORSEWOMAN

Maybe Pénélope Leprévost was the most surprised and most satisfied runner-up for many years. She and the lovely young 10-year-old stallion Vagabond de la Pomme, by Vigo D'Arsouilles and the dam Sauterelle de la Pomme by For Pleasure and Darco-daughter Narcotique De Muze II, started with a good flawless quick round that earned them a sixth place in Final I. They followed up with an irritatingly light touch that rendered them 4 faults in Final II and placing them 4th before the final day. There they were one of the few clears in round A, very well done. In round B the young stallion was still jumping very well but took down the Bellagio fence, number 10, a truly difficult obstacle on the course, to finish on 9 faults. "I came to Las Vegas to give Vagabond de la Pomme a little experience in major championships and had no great expectations," declared the stylish French rider. "Vagabond has handled the applauding crowds very well all the time, he liked the environment, the Nevada desert heat and the atmosphere, now he's ready for bigger things but it's Flora de Mariposa relating to the European Championship." Pénélope Leprovost is proof that the courses during the meeting worked – if you went in with consideration of your horse.

ONE HAPPY YOUNGSTER

Bertram Allen and his Molly Malone V, the second Kannan-daughter among the medalists, is a combination known for being über-fast. It was no big surprise when they won the speed class, which constitutes the Final I. They were even ahead of Fellers' Flexible, a chestnut stallion with veins virtually full of lightning. Final I in Las Vegas will forever be known as the 'you had to be 19' final – the winner Bertram Allen was 19 years old and so was Flexible. Molly Malone V went on to Final II where she and Bertram had the 12c down, the vertical out of what was to be referred to as the triple combination from hell. A total of 16 horses faulted here, and D'Ambrosio said afterwards; "There was a difficult choice of distances, and either choice needed to be executed to perfection. Many of those who chose to go on six strides ended up without enough impulsion at the middle element, and I was surprised

more didn't go for the five." Anthony D'Ambrosio commented the outcome with a wry smile. "I recommended everyone to ride the distance on five strides; the riders did not believe me, most did six and got into trouble." In the last Final Molly Malone V had one fence down in each round but Bertram Allen showed no disappointment whatsoever.

performed very consistently together with 12-year-old Domino, a gelding by Thunder van de Zuuthoeve. Verlooy was 5th placed going into Final III where he managed to go clear in round A and continue with just 4 faults in round B, finishing on 10 faults keeping his ranking. Best nation in the Final was by far the USA as Beezie finished 4th and

“I’VE BEEN TRYING A LONG TIME TO WIN THIS AND I’VE COME CLOSE MANY TIMES. IT’S THE THIRD TIME I WAS IN THE LEAD GOING INTO THE FINAL COMPETITION, AND I NEARLY MESSED IT UP AGAIN!” – STEVE GUERDAT

Instead he thanked his horse like a true horseman. "In the first round I made a mistake but felt she jumped quite well, but the second round was a bad round – I got much too close to fence two. But I'm very happy to be here. I've had a great week and feel honored to be sitting up her with these riders at my age."

THE NEXT GENERATION

He was not the only rider participating in his first World Cup Final at a very young age. This year the Final had two 19-year-old riders as Belgian rider Jos Verlooy will be 20 in December 2015. Though not even two decades on this earth he has to date done over 700 international starts, impressive to say the least, and it was not his first time in Vegas. Verlooy

Rich Fellers 7th on the agile senior Flexible. The home nation also had an up-and-coming young star in Lucy Davis placed 9th. She is only 22 years old but this was her third World Cup Final, doing better and better each year. Together with her amazing and trustworthy Barron she was third in the challenging Final II, delivering a clear round and just one down in the jump-off. She had a very good position going into Final III with just 7 faults but there she and Barron seemed to run out of petrol, still Lucy claimed her first top-10-placing.

SATISFACTION AND DISSAPPOINTMENT

The Netherlands only have one title to date so Maikel van der Vleuten, Jur Vrieling and Gerco Schröder, basically the golden team from Normandy, came to Vegas hungry for a win. They did well, just not top-notch meaning top three. Still the Dutch team made the courses look like child's play. Van der Vleuten was riding his world-class stallion VDL Groep Verdi TN N.O.P. and they had a bit of a rumble in Final II, came out clear of round A and finished on 12 faults and a 6th place. Jur Vrieling's amazing jumper stallion VDL Zirocco Blue N.O.P. did good rounds but had a few rails down appearing to be a bit tired early on but with capacity to go to the moon. They finished 10th on 20 faults. Gerco Schröder's Glock's Cognac Champblanc started out poorly but performed better and better with each round gaining experience. The Clearway-son was the only one to handle round B in Final III with zero faults on fences, just one tiny time fault, something that made him unique. Germany came outside the top 10; they had a really bad year despite four riders going in. Last year's title holder, Daniel Deusser with Cornet D'Amour came in as 14th, Hans-Dieter Dreher with Cool and Easy finished in 18th place, Marco Kutscher's horse Cornet's Cristallo suffered from colic and never made it to the ring. Marcus Ehning had brought with him Singular LS La Silla. In the first Final the stallion showed obvious discontent and after two stops Marcus opted out.

WHEN AMBITION TAKES OVER

The World Cup Final was barely over, but the talking had just begun. Frightful courses, too hard, too tough, said some riders. Several other riders, especially the third part of the start field who managed, stated; sure it was tough, maybe the Final II course was too challenging as a second day set-up, but that is how it should be on a championship. The truth is most certainly somewhere in between. There is a lot of core in course designer D'Ambrosio's comment: "If the riders had listened more to me they would have had a better outcome in Final II," as he stated in the course walk already before Final III. ■



Photo: Herve Bonnaud/FEI

Carlos Lopez riding Prince de la Mare wins the Madrid leg of the Longines FEI World Cup™ leg of the series.