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## Press Release

June 8, 2024

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### Shane Sweetnam maintains Ireland's dominance

The eagerly awaited **Pays de la Loire Region Derby**, held every Saturday at the **Jumping International de La Baule—Officiel de France**, was won by Ireland for the third year running. World No.9 **Shane Sweetnam** beat the Swiss rider and world no. 3 and 2012 Olympic champion **Steve Guerdat**. On Sunday, the **Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule** promises world-class competition and an exceptional show featuring the world's best riders.



If you look hard enough, you'll likely find a few shamrocks lying on the sublime grass pitch of the François André stadium in La Baule. Irish shamrocks, of course, as Irish riders have dominated the **Pays de la Loire Region Derby** for the past few years. After **Shane Breen** last year and **Denis Lynch** in 2022, **Shane Sweetnam**, competing with the 10-year-old mare **Irandole du Flot**, again demonstrated his mastery of the art of the derby with a perfectly controlled run over the 1,50m and 21 obstacles on the course, ranging from the usual show-jumping elements (verticals, oxers, combinations, etc.) to natural ones (mound, ditch, counter-bottom, counter-high, etc.). Last to take to the track, the world number 9 beat Switzerland's **Steve Guerdat** by 2.57s on **Easy Star de Talma**, the only other clear round of the day on the new course designed by course conductor **Grégory Bodo**. *"Winning the Derby at La Baule is always a tremendous victory. I've been riding this horse for two years, but this was his first Derby. I was confident, but you never know until you've jumped in this event. It's the third successive Irish victory, which can no doubt be explained by the fact that we grew up galloping in the countryside. This form of riding is part of our culture. These events are great for us and the horses because they help in their training."*

A podium finisher on several occasions in recent years, **Steve Guerdat** once again had to settle for second place. *"I adore this event, and so do my horses", says the Swiss world no. 3. Many thanks to the organisers and partners. The public loves it, and so do we. We love this sport because we enjoy it, but we also like people to enjoy it. Events like the Derby have everything it takes to do that. Easy Star was fantastic today, even if I needed to be faster again. He's already won the Derby at Falsterbo and finished runner-up in Dinard. But that's going to come. It's pushing me to return and add this race to my list of victories. I thoroughly enjoyed the new course, which is a step in the right direction. We're used to jumping verticals and oxers, which is quite different. We enjoyed ourselves and the public, who were thrilled with us. It was a wonderful afternoon of sport."* Twenty-two-year-old British rider **Lily Attwood** was competing in her first derby, as was her horse **Johnnie Walker**. *"It was great fun. I loved it. My first visit to La Baule was a great experience, and I'm in excellent company on the podium."*

## **The Netherlands' Lars Kersten tops all the stars in the Prix Saur**

In the Prix Saur, the second most lucrative event of the competition (€110,000) and the last chance for some to qualify for Sunday's **Rolex Grand Prix Ville de La Baule**, Dutchman **Lars Kersten**, on **Funky Fred Marienshof Z**, sprang a surprise by being the fastest through the nine of the nine barriers. *"I'm delighted to win in front of such a large crowd,"* Kersten enthused. *"My stallion is only ten years old). He has run well indoors but is still discovering this type of big track. I hope to take him to the Nations Cups in the coming months. I was lucky in the jump-off because I nearly made a mistake, but the result was fantastic".* The 24-year-old rider and world n°130 finished ahead of such prestigious riders as **American McLain Ward** on **Callas** (2nd, two-hundredths behind), Ireland's **Shane Sweetnam** (world n°9)

on RR **Combella**, Austria's **Max Kühner** (n°5) on **EIC Quantum Robin V**, Switzerland's **Martin Fuchs** (n°6) on **Bastille**, and American **Kent Farrington** (n°7) on **Toulayna**. The only French qualifier, **Nicolas Delmotte**, with **Jordan Molga M**, finished in eighth place.

During the first round, British rider **Lily Attwood** crashed on the approach to the triple with **Cor-Leon vd Vlierbeek Z**. Attwood got up quickly, but the horse struggled for several long minutes to leave the track. The initial news from the veterinary staff following the necessary tests was reassuring, pending further tests.

### **Lilly Attwood and Camille Condé Ferreira take centre stage**

Late in the morning, in the Prix GrandPrix (1.45 m, accumulator class), Britain's **Lily Attwood**, the penultimate rider to start with Karibou Horta, beat **Roger-Yves Bost**, who had long led the competition with **Ever de Turan**. *"This is my first time here, and I'm thrilled to win a competition at such a prestigious and magnificent venue. I've had this horse for over five years. He's fast and respectful, and I could feel that he battled for me today."*

In the CSI 1\* events, **Mélanie Cisneros** on **Gemme de Rouillac** won the **Prix La Baule Événements - Palais des congrès Atlantia** (1.15 m) and **Camille Condé Ferreira** on **Black Knight Gem**, the **Derby Laiterie de Montaigu**, contested after a moving tribute to **Jean-Maurice Bonneau**, coach of the French world champion team in 2002, who passed away a few weeks ago. *"I'm delighted, especially as it's the Derby de la Laiterie Montaigu, my partner," smiles the rider. "I didn't have a brilliant start to the competition, and I wasn't at all expecting to win the Derby. I was even reluctant to start this morning, but I thought I would regret it because the Derby is an extraordinary event. Black is a horse I know very well, and it belongs to a friend on her honeymoon. I'm sure she'll be over the moon. »*



## The Rolex Grand Prix Ville de la Baule in Apotheosis

On Sunday, the **Rolex Grand Prix Ville de la Baule** will be the traditional finale to the competition and the first instalment of the brand new Rolex Series, which encompasses six CSI and CSIO 5\* events (La Baule, Dinard, Rome, Brussels, Dublin and Wellington).

Fifty hope to see their name engraved on the marble hanging from the stadium's main stand, where all the winners' names have been inscribed for over 60 years. Brilliant runners-up in the **Barrière Nations' Cup** on Friday, the French hope to succeed **Nicolas Delmotte**, the last Frenchman to win, in 2021 with **Urviso du Roch**. To do so, they will have to excel against top-level opposition, such as Switzerland's **Steve Guerdat**, 2012 Olympic champion and competing with **Dynamix de Belhème**, his probable partner for the forthcoming Olympic Games, who impressed on Thursday in the Prix FFE, or Belgium's **Grégory Wathelet** with **Bond Jamesbond de Hay**, the **American Karl Cook** with **Caracole de la Roque**, crowned last week at the Rolex Grand Prix in Rome, the German quartet of **Philipp Weishaupt**, **Andre Thieme**, **Marcus Ehning** and **Kendra Claricia Brinkop**, winners of the **Barrière Nations Cup**, the Austrian **Max Kühner** (world no. 5) and a multitude of other couples used to excelling in the world's greatest competitions.

### The "Étoiles du complet" sparkle!

« 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... zero! » Saturday afternoon the packed grandstands of the François André stadium were in the chorus as they counted down to the six eventing riders invited to the Jumping International de La Baule for the first time. **Nicolas Touzaint**, **Astier Nicolas**, **Karim Laghouag**, **Maxime Livio**, **Jean-Lou Bigot** and **Stéphane Landois**, who have done their beloved France proud at the world's greatest events for decades, competed against each other on a derby-style course for this first edition of the 'Étoiles du complet'. All in good fun and for a worthy cause as well. Under the auspices of **Platinum Sellier**, a lottery was held to raise funds for the **HOPE** association, which supports women during and after cancer by providing horse therapy. History may recall that **Nicolas Touzaint** rode the only clear round with **Fibonacci de Lessac HDC**, ahead of **Maxime Livio** (Todd de Suzan) and **Stéphane Landois** (Uh La Up de Crazy). *"It was brilliant," says Nicolas Touzaint, 2004 team (bronze in 2021), two-time individual European champion and winner of the most prestigious competitions. "The public really liked it, and it was great fun for us. The atmosphere is a real boost. I also came to work my horse, and that, too, was a success. He jumped well, which is reassuring. I'm a fan of grass courses, a bit like cross-country in eventing. La Baule is one of the legendary courses. The fact that it's open to us is great. In the future, we could imagine an event with a few directional obstacles to make it look like indoor cross-country. That would be great for everyone."* Karim Laghouag, who also won Olympic gold in 2004 and bronze in 2021, is equally delighted. *"It's a bit like the La Baule version of indoor cross-country, with a lot of participation from the public. There were a lot of people in the grandstands, which was cool. It's nice to compete in front of a public that doesn't necessarily know who you are."*



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