



AUDI Grand Prix Bordeaux

Julien Épaillard and the revenge

Press release, Bordeaux, Sunday, February 4, 2024

No, it's not revenge for yesterday's relatively disappointing performance in the World Cup with Dubaï de Cèdre (8 faults), as Julien Épaillard will explain. Nevertheless, his victory with his faithful Donatello d'Auge in the AUDI Grand Prix is one hell of a revenge for the French rugby team's defeat by Ireland on Friday as France's number one rider single-handedly beat two Irish riders on Sunday afternoon, and it felt good.



Third victory in a major Bordeaux class for world number 5 Julien Épaillard with Donatello d'Auge, who was imperious in the jump-off. © Artiste Associé

The scenario was identical to yesterday's: the first (to start in the jump-off) remained the first (on the scoresheet)! A nice way to make up for Saturday evening's course with Dubaï de Cèdre which ended with two faults: "It's not really about revenge, says Julien Épaillard. I'm very happy with my mare in the World Cup, she jumped very well, even though she just came out of a two-month break. In the past, she has made clear rounds jumping less well than she did yesterday. So, no revenge, the horses are doing well. Maybe I made the wrong entries: in Amsterdam I won the Grand Prix with Dubaï and here I win the same Grand Prix with Donatello. Maybe I should have done the opposite: enter Dubaï in the World Cup last week and Donatello last night (laughs). It's easy to say that in hindsight. What's important is that both horses have had a good start to the year, both have won their 5* Grand Prix, which bodes well for the rest of 2024."

In any case, with or without yesterday's performance, the Frenchman has already qualified for the final in Riyadh with a dilemma: which of his two champions will he choose to try and win this World Cup? "I don't know yet. It will be one of them, but not both. Maybe this year Dubaï will do the two big championships. I'm still thinking about it, but it might not be a bad idea for them to have a big final like the World Cup before the Games. We'll think about it

with Henk (Nooren, the national coach) and we'll take a little more time before we make a decision."

This is the third time that Julien Épaillard has won a major class in Bordeaux, after 2017 and 2020, and it's almost becoming a tradition! "A tradition? laughs Epaillard. I don't know, but yes, I'd like it to continue. I'm always happy to win here, it's a World Cup qualifier, it's a mythical event and you always want to do well here." That is also what Ireland's Denis Lynch (2nd with with Brooklyn Heights) and the less experienced Jessika Burke (3rd with Nikey HH) did, yet it was not enough to beat the Frenchman. A victory for France over Ireland, that's something to savour!

Driving: Bram Chardon overthrows Boyd Exell



3 In the end, 3 hundredths of a second separated defending champion Boyd Exell and new World Cup champion Bram Chardon after two days of competition: driving has reached an incredible level of excellence. © R&B Presse - Adèle Renaudon

What a final! What an ending! A crazy final in which the three drivers qualified for the drive-off entered the arena with a minimum of time between them. In particular, a gap of just 33 hundredths between the provisional leader and defending champion, Australian Boyd Exell, and his usual runner-up, Dutchman Bram Chardon. But today, Chardon rose to the occasion with a crazy course that put pressure on the Wallaby. A fantastic time score, forcing Exell to take all the risks, with the added stress. The fault came early as his car hit a cone at the start of the race: "I didn't give up and kept going. My grooms, who had seen it, didn't say anything to me, they just encouraged me, pushed me... 'keep going, keep going'..." and he almost succeeded, missing by 83 hundredths, which means that he was 3"17 faster on the course than the Dutchman, who won his third World Championship title after 2019 and 2022: "Yes, I gave everything in this drive-off because I came here with one goal: to win. Yesterday I made a mistake and Boyd and I kept pushing each other! This has been the case for the last few seasons and every year we raise the level. It's incredible to finish this final after three rounds with such a close time difference and only one mistake each, and tonight I'm really happy to be on the top of the podium with my father on the third step beside me." And it was father Ijsbrand who had the last word, because in addition to his family's happiness, he, like Boyd Exell, also wanted to "thank the organisers in Bordeaux. Every year we have great sport, a great audience and we are welcomed in the best possible conditions: beautiful stables for our horses, fine hotels and so on. Everything to make our lives easier. We all love Bordeaux." A big thank you to these artists for this great show!

A sold-out sports program, an ever-expanding horse exhibition with almost 230 exhibitors, 40 hours of entertainment and regional competitions that continue to make this not-to-be-missed show in the South-West of France shine. One page is being turned, but the next is already being prepared: see you from 6 to 9 February 2025.