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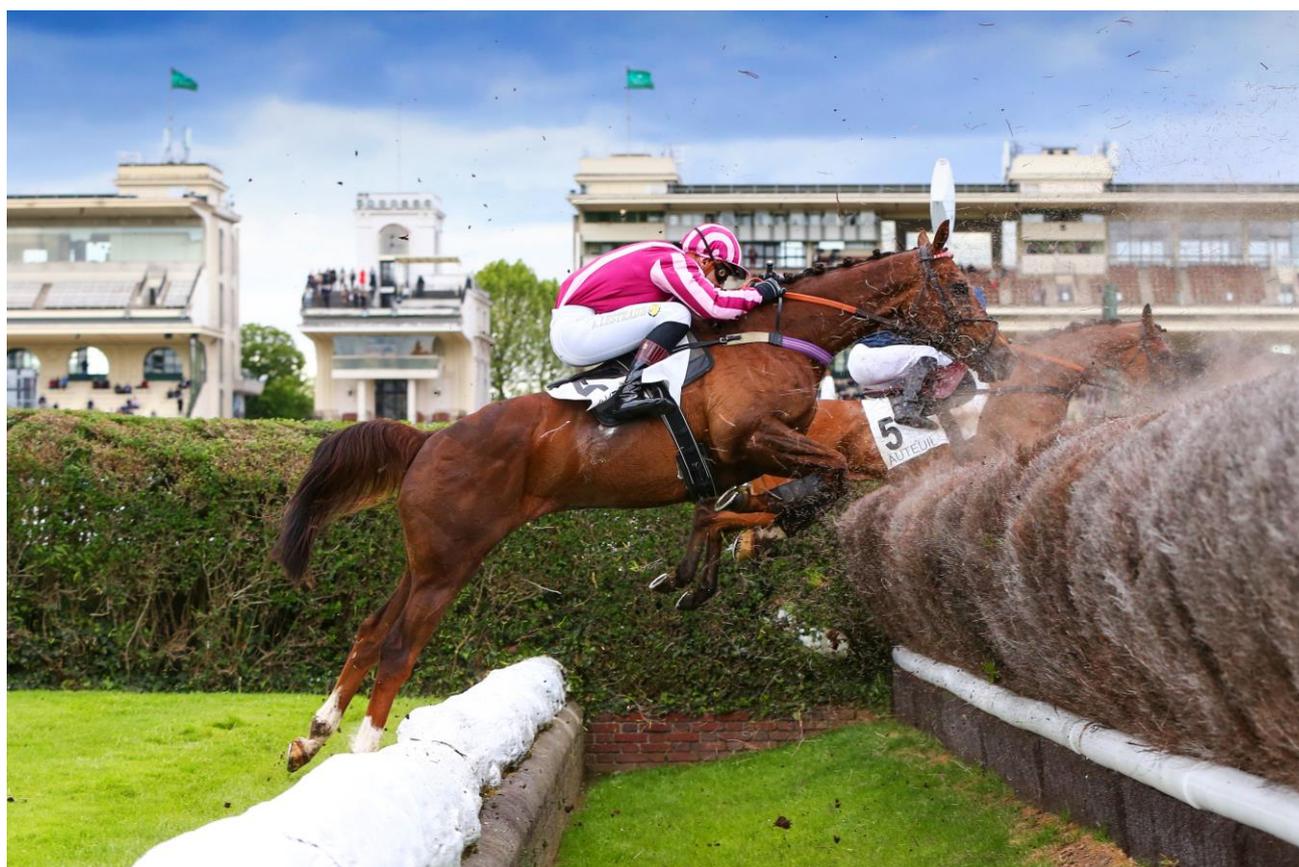
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DOCTEUR DE BALLON DEFENDS HIS TITLE IN AN EXCEPTIONAL RENEWAL OF THE GRAND STEEPLE-CHASE DE PARIS



We've rarely had cause to witness such an exceptional edition of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris, which was graced by two previous winners (**Docteur de Ballon** et **Carriacou**), plus some exceptional emerging talent (**Le Berry** et **Galleo Conti...**), allied to the presence of the riding star of the Anglo-Irish scene, Rachael Blackmore. We also mustn't forget the presence of a British raider, (**Lord du Mesnil**).

This edition of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris (Gr1) is without doubt the world's most alluring jump race in the world in 2021. Furthermore, this particular edition consecrated the presence of the champion who will linger long in the memory: **Docteur de Ballon**! He not only defended his title, but also struck an emotional chord within the fraternity of French racing. As since 1874, only ten horses have been capable of winning two (or more) editions of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris.

A breakdown of the race

Le Berry set the tempo with Lord du Mesnil in his slipstream, and the Rachael Blackmore-ridden **Ajas** keeping a watching brief on the leaders...whereas Docteur de Ballon, just as he did last year, languished at the back of the pack. **Carriacou**, the 2019 winner, also kept in touch after racing in mid-division. The British raider **Lord du Mesnil** made a mistake in the middle of the race which unshipped his rider Daniel Mullins.

Although the partnership were unscathed. At the 16th fence, **General en Chef**, true to his name, took over at the head of affairs after whisking the lead off his stablemate **Le Berry**.

On the last bend, **Docteur de Ballon** went on the offensive and he was lying in fourth place as the field hit the straight. After jumping the last, he made his considerable class tell after producing an impressive surge which enabled him to record his second win in the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris (Gr1). The best horse in the race came out on top and the visual impression was a stunning one. **Carriacou**, another of the veteran performers, was beaten five lengths into second. **Galleo Conti**, a mere stripling at the age of five, was third.

The lady trainers clean up



Given a standing ovation by the Auteuil public in the wake of this performance, **Docteur de Ballon** is trained in the west of France, at Senonnes to be precise (in the Mayenne region), by Louisa Carberry. The British national, having competed at the highest level as an event rider, now boasts three Gr.1 jump success...all thanks to **Docteur de Ballon**. Louisa Carberry is the wife of Irish national Philip Carberry, and the latter won the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris as a jockey in 2008. **Docteur de Ballon** is owned by his

breeders, Monsieur and Madame Robert Gasche-Luc: two octogenarians and former shopkeepers based at Saint-Mars-sous-Ballon in the Sarthe region...

Docteur de Ballon was ridden by Bertrand Lestrade : the same rider who won on him in 2020. It marked his third Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris win (2021, 2020 et 2013).

The second place went to the another 'chaser trained by a woman trainer, Isabelle Pacault. She also bred her charge **Carriacou** in tandem with her brothers and sister at the family stud in Normandy (the Haras de Mirande). In common with **Docteur de Ballon**, **Carriacou** is a nine-year-old. This is a ripe old age for a racehorse ! Incidentally, **Carriacou**, won the 2019 edition of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris in 2019, and it marks the third time that he had achieved a podium finish in the race.

What connections said...

Louisa Carberry, the trainer of Docteur de Ballon, 1st (based at Senonnes – Mayenne region – 53)

« He's a freak and so, too, and is his jockey! The horse is a Godsend. What a jockey! I am very happy that the public came through the doors. I want to share this Docteur de Ballon moment with everyone. We were there to achieve an appreciable result and, in the bend, he was more or less in the the same position as last year, at the same place. Carriacou was in front and we know how good he is! However, once my horse got by him, having picked up the pace, I knew that it was a good outcome, a done deal! He has given us so much, and he has nothing left to prove, and it's just a bonus really. So to win this race again, has really moved me! Philip [Carberry], my husband, was willing to come as well, as he had packed his bags but, at the last minute, he changed his mind – just like last year. I don't know if he saw the race, as I haven't had time to call him as such! »

Bertrand Lestrade, the jockey of Docteur de Ballon, 1st

« It's great and just like a dream. He loves it when races are run in such a way and when the pace isn't overtaking, as it enables him to get in the race. Going down the backstretch, I even had the luxury of being able to take a pull, and I said to myself: 'if he's up to it, it's best to be second rather than take a tumble. The horse was more than equal to the task. When my horse made headway halfway down the bend I said: "it's not possible." At the second last fence [notes to editors: the double barrière], I almost got carried away by kicking on too soon, as suddenly I was coming on very quickly to the obstacle. I'm aware of when you ask your horse for a big jump, his feet can brush the obstacle. However, when you are riding good horses, they tend to compensate for human error! I've been very luck in my career, having been associated with many high class acts...However, I've never been associated with a horse that has been able to score a repeat win at this level! I'm on cloud nine. I was on board a crack performer. Louisa and Phil {Carberry} told me "ride the horse to suit - just as you are accustomed to. They put no pressure on me. »

Monique and Robert Gasche-Luc (based at Saint-Mars-sous-Ballon, in the Sarthe region), the owner-breeders of Docteur de Ballon (1st):

« It's a passion which means a lot, and which can move you to tears. We never thought that he could gain a second win. It was unthinkable that he could come back to win the race, having given his rivals a fair head start. We will be back next year! The horse will now have a break and be roughed off for the season. We find that racing is very addictive! »

Isabelle Pacaut, the trainer of Carriacou, 2nd (based at Maisons-Laffitte – Yvelines – 78)

“ It was really great – really superb. I believed in his chances. The only think that had eluded me so far was his second place (laughing). James Reveley seemed a bit disappointed, but he rode a perfect race. Just see how cool the horse is...he's hardly blowing.! Docteur de Ballon is a crack performer. The ground was right up his street, and so, too, for Docteur de Ballon. The first and second are nine-year-olds and it's great to be able to perform in such a way at such a high level. I dreamed that I was racing Carriacou in Australian type blinkers, but finally there was no need. Retirement for the horse doesn't beckon as such!”

Guillaume Macaire, trainer of Galleo Conti, 3rd (based in Royan – Charente Maritime – 17)

“I would have preferred that Feu Follet didn’t make a mistake and drop his jockey. Galléo Conti has put up a very good performance, he was the first of the 5-year-olds to cross the line, however I wasn’t pleased with his preparation coming into the race. I had a lot of trouble with him: when he finished 4th in the Prix Troytown (a Group 3 prep), he didn’t run his race. He wasn’t well, and he hadn’t run since then which wasn’t ideal. He has had a few issues which upset his preparation.”

Rachael Blackmore (jockey of Ajas, 7th): “A fantastic experience”

The Irish jockey Rachael Blackmore is the new star of jump racing across the Channel, making headlines in the daily papers, and not just the sports section! Her 2021 record is an impressive one: she became the first female jockey to top the list at the Cheltenham Festival, the Olympic Games of jump racing, before winning the mythic Aintree Grand National in Great Britain. On Sunday 23rd May, she was riding the legendary Auteuil track for the first time on Ajas, trained by David Cottin, who finished 7th in the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris, finding the distance too taxing in the finish.

She commented, “They are very imposing fences I suppose but I watched all of Ajas’ races and I was very confident: all I had to do was staying on his back and not fall off him. He is extremely good to jump so it is a pity that we could not finish closer but delighted to get the opportunity to ride in the race anyway. The fences are very different definitely. But I was on such an experienced horse that it was just very enjoyable. Down to the railway, he would quicken up, he knew what he was doing, very experienced, so he made my job very easy. The French horses have a different style of jumping also. It was a fantastic experience on a horse at Ajas. I definitely enjoyed it to the very last and then realized I was not going to win anymore! I hope that someday I will come back.”

David Cottin, trainer of Général en Chef (4th), Le Berry (5th) and Ajas (7th) – (based at Chantilly, in the Oise – 60)

“Général en Chef has run well. The loose horse caused him some trouble, and he used up a bit too much energy. He’s still immature, but he’s a good horse. I will wait for the results of the scope for Ajas, but Rachael Blackmore said that he didn’t stay the distance. He was the first to succumb in the home straight, despite having a perfect race. He didn’t overuse his energy and jumped well. Le Berry had a breathing problem.”

LINKS

- Loop of video images of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris 2021 : [HERE](#)
- Interview of the Irish jockey Rachael Blackmore after the race : [HERE](#)
- On-board camera on Bertrand Lestrade/Docteur de Ballon : download [HERE](#) + YouTube link [HERE](#)
- Free of rights pictures for media only : [HERE](#)

About France Galop

The aim of the France Galop association is to promote the breeding and training of racehorses by paying out prize-money in Flat and Jump races and awarding premiums to owners and breeders of racehorses. In this context, it organises and controls the horse racing industry in France.

The association also oversees the integrity of Flat and Jump racing in France, whether it is ensuring that the rules of racing are applied or testing racehorses (France Galop adopts a zero-tolerance policy to when prohibited substances are administered to any horse entered in a race and 100% of winners are tested.)

France Galop is the operator of the five most important French racecourses (Auteuil, Chantilly, Deauville, ParisLongchamp and Saint-Cloud) and the organiser of major international meetings. It also manages three training centres dedicated exclusively to racehorses: Chantilly, Deauville and Maisons-Laffitte.

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