

Jumping Verona

2022

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WILL HISTORY BE MADE IN TOMORROW'S LONGINES QUALIFIER AT VERONA?

Jumping Verona always promises to present one of the most exciting legs of the **Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Western European League**, and this year history hangs in the balance once again.

The Roll of Honour shows that throughout the past editions staged in this beautiful city a female athlete has never won, and that the only lady winner since the series was first staged in Italy back in 1984 is Switzerland's Lesley McNaught Maendli who came out on top with Dulf in Bologna in 1999.

And there is another piece of history that needs to be addressed. There has never been an Italian winner on home ground in all that time.

Could this be the year that all changes? If the form book is anything to go by then both options are very possible.....

Startlist

In the **40-strong startlist** for tomorrow's fourth leg of the 2022/2023 series is the lady who currently heads the Western European League leaderboard, Norway's **Victoria Gulliksen** who, with the brilliant Equine America Papa Roach, finished second at the opening leg on home ground in Oslo, and sixth a week later in Helsinki, Finland.

The 30-year-old rider finished individually ninth at last year's hotly-contested FEI European Championships in Riesenbeck, Germany with the exciting 13-year-old chestnut gelding. And the plucky pair have a big fan-club of followers who will be hoping that another good result tomorrow will send them on their way to the Longines Final 2023 in Omaha, USA next April. And maybe even into the Verona history books this weekend.

At that second leg in Helsinki it was a female one-two finish when **Angelica Augustsson Zanotelli** came out on top with Kalinka van de Nachtegale, and this pair will start in 18th place tomorrow. The Swedish rider was very excited after her win because she only recently started asking the 12-year-old mare to go faster against the clock and that afternoon she responded with courage and confidence. If they can find that compatibility again tomorrow they could be tough nuts to crack.

First

A total of **six Italian riders** will attempt to become the first home side victor, led by Riccardo Pisani who will be first into the ring. Piergiorgio Bucci will start in eighth place followed by Francesco Turturiello in ninth and Giacomo Casadei who will be 24th to go. Emanuele Gaudio will start in 33rd place and then the final Italian contender will be last-to-go Lorenzo De Luca who posted a win and a third place finish yesterday.

They'll all have to fend off a mighty challenge from their opposition however, including world number one and double World Champion **Henrik von Eckermann** from Sweden, triple series champions **Marcus Ehning** from Germany and **Steve Guerdat** from Switzerland and British young guns **Harry Charles** and **Jack Whitaker**.

Another man with his own agenda will be Switzerland's **Bryan Balsiger** who will be hoping to add another success to the one he posted when winning the WEL first round in Oslo. Maximum points tomorrow would see him all but qualified for the Final at this early stage of the 14 leg Western European League series.

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And then of course there is the French, whose three contenders include 21-year-old **Jeanne Sadran** who has been really impressive this week, 30-year-old **Julien Anquetin** who won yesterday's Speed Class and 40-year-old **Simon Delestre** who scorched home to win last night's main event and who looks a formidable opponent for the rest going in to tomorrow's Longines qualifier.

Still going strong

It is 22 years since **John Whitaker** posted the last of the Two World Cup wins with Welham at Bologna in 2000 and the British legend is still going strong, finishing a close second in today's opening competition, the Franco Tucci Speed.



“Verona is actually one of the best shows on the circuit with good prizemoney, good facilities and good ground”, said the 67-year-old superstar who has six Olympic Games, seven World Championships and 22 World Cup Finals under his belt. He was twice World Cup champion with the great Milton in 1990 and 1991. There's not much he doesn't know about the sport of showjumping and the changes it has seen down the years.

Looking at tomorrow's start list he said this afternoon, *“the world's top riders are here and it's not easy to figure out how it will go - out of 40 pairs, 30 are potential winners. I'm drawn third for tomorrow which is not an easy start but it's ok... last time here I was first to go!”*, he said.

As always he'll be giving it his best shot when the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ action gets underway at 14.15 local time tomorrow afternoon. Don't miss a moment....

An **artist's touch** on the fences at Jumping Verona. Or at least on one of the fences included the courses designed by chef de piste Uliano Vezzani for the Longines FEI Show Jumping World Cup™ events. The planks making up one of these fences were painted by **Andrea Baleri**, a 42-year-old artist, who has suffered from spastic tetraparesis from birth. He was born in Bergamo but now lives in Albino.



Baleri graduated from the Art High School and the Academy of Fine Arts in Carrara and held his first personal exhibition in 2002 (“Quick Movements”), which has since been followed by numerous personal and group shows. Andrea paints while sitting in a wheelchair and his works - in a contemporary style - are characterized by bold dashes of colour, applied with long brushes or even using the wheels themselves, touches that become an authentic gesture of expressiveness.

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