PRESS RELEASE / #3

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A FRENCH DOUBLE AND A GERMAN TRIUMPH ON OPENING DAY AT JUMPING VERONA

An opening-class win for Germany's Kendra Claricia Brinkop and back-to-back victories for French riders Julien Epaillard and Simon Delestre got Jumping Verona 2023 off to a flying start today.

The Italian fixture has once again attracted a stunning cast of players including seven of the Top Ten on the current FEI rankings headed up by world number one and double world champion Henrik von Eckermann from Sweden, number two and reigning individual Olympic champion Ben Maher from Great Britain, Swiss superstar Martin Fuchs who is world number four and newly-crowned European champion Steve Guerdat who is number five.

Frenchman Julien Epaillard who is currently seventh in the rankings made his mark today along with fellow countryman Simon Delestre who holds the number eight spot, and Austria's Max Kühner who is world number nine is also in action at this weekend's 5* fixture.

Kicked off

Brinkop kicked off with victory in the opening Prestige Two-Phase competition partnering the in-form mare Ma Belle, with runner-up spot going to Italy's Alberto Zorzi and another 11-year-old grey mare Stakalite.

Brinkop has a nice connection with Jumping Verona having finished second in the World Cup qualifier with Kastelle Memo in 2021. "It was my first time here so I wanted to come back of course, and I think I had a great start with that win here today!", said the rider who turns 29 next week.

Then the French speed-master, Julien Epaillard, steered his new ride, the 11-year-old gelding Hoover, to victory in the Banca Passadore 1.50m Speed, pipping America's Jessica Springsteen and her 10-year-old mare Naomi van het Keizerhofs for the top honours.

The formidable 46-year-old Frenchman whose exceptional ability to ride against the clock leaves him a feared opponent to the very best was delighted with his win and said afterwards, "I really like it here in Verona, there's a super atmosphere and everything is super for the horses and the riders!"]

Unbelievable

The final win of the day went to Delestre who showed unbelievable pace in the 13-horse jump-off against the clock that decided the fate of the Kask Jump-Off.

His young mare Olga van de Kruishoeve galloped to victory ahead of Germany's Daniel Deusser and the veteran 15-year-old stallion Scuderia 1918 Tobago Z who had to settle for runner-up spot.

Delestre only started competing Olga in August this year following her career with Moroccan athlete Leina Benkhraba who competed her up to CSI3* level.

"This is really a fantastic start. She is a young horse, only nine, but she was already amazing last week in Lyon where she was third in the Masters. She won two classes in the Morocco Tour and I have her this week for the Grand Prix", the French rider said.