

LE PRINTEMPS DES SPORTS ÉQUESTRES

LE GRAND PARQUET - FONTAINEBLEAU

16 - 19 AVRIL 2026
22 - 26 AVRIL 2026

Press release
Fontainebleau, 26 April 2026

FONTAINEBLEAU – PRINTEMPS DES SPORTS ÉQUESTRES CSI5* – GRAND PRIX GL EVENTS THIBEAU SPITS COMES OUT TOP AFTER A TRILLING GRAND PRIX

The *Printemps des Sports Équestres* came to a spectacular conclusion on Sunday afternoon as Thibeau Spits and Impress-K van't Kattenheye Z won the GL events Grand Prix. The young Belgian rider recorded a major win against top-level competition in this Grand Prix held in the Main Arena (*Terrain d'Honneur*) at the *Grand Parquet de Fontainebleau*, cheered on by the passionate spectators who were treated to a thrilling show.

Today, the sun was out and so were the fans, who filled the stands and created a warm and vibrant atmosphere. Indeed, with every round, the riders were cheered on, the audience encouraging them to push back the limits.

And in the prestigious Main Arena (*Terrain d'Honneur*) of the Grand Parquet, the starting line-up for the Grand Prix was more than worthy of the fervour in the stands. Fifty of the world's best riders, representing 16 countries on four continents, were gathered for the weekend's showcase event. With just a few months to go before the world show-jumping championships in Aachen, this competition was like a full-scale dress rehearsal.

For the occasion, Grégory Bodo had designed a carefully-planned course that left no room for improvisation.

The tone was set from the very beginning. The layout, which included a number of obstacles from the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, meant the riders and horses needed to ride precise lines, remaining focused and responsive throughout. The difficulties included the wall representing the round stained-glass window of Notre-Dame de Paris, followed by a line leading to the triple oxer-vertical-oxer, before heading for the wall of Provence lavender fences, as well as the double verticals in the colours of Saur, placed just after the river. However, the bar that fell most often was Number 2, a vertical obstacle in the turn that was clearly more demanding than it first appeared.

No-one managed a clear round until the German rider Christian Ahlmann took to the course with Untouched LB, who started in number seventh position. However, the audience's enthusiasm was short-lived, since the German rider received 2 penalty points for exceeding the time limit, thus depriving him of any hope of making the jump-off.



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Finally, France's Mégane Moissonnier, who started in eleventh place, managed to combine both precision and speed to register the first clear round of the class with Crooner Tame, after a thrilling ride that had the public holding their breath.

The response to her performance came shortly after, as Scott Brash (no less!) showed Mégane Moissonnier that he still had a trick or two in his bag. Riding his magnificent Hello Mango, the world number one produced a real demonstration, in a time close to that of the French rider, suggesting the jump-off would go down to the wire. Then, Thibeau Spits, who started 17th, joined them in the jump-off with Impress-K van't Kattenheye Z after a round that seemed almost "easy".

Julien Épaillard, the newly-crowned French Pro Élite champion, started in 21st position and received a penalty on the double vertical after the river. Nicolas Sers, who was second in the French Championships in 2025, and his faithful Eleven de Riverland, also saw his qualification for the jump-off slip through his fingers for going 14 hundredths over time. The same fate awaited the Irish rider Tom Wachman on Tabasco de Toxandria Z, who crossed the finish line 53 hundredths too late. Theodore Boris and Cazan Z were also penalised for exceeding the time limit.

With a series of little mistakes here and there, nobody seemed capable of finding the solution any more. There were no more clear rounds until Switzerland's Martin Fuchs (the 39th rider to start) on Conner Jei and Belgium's Pieter Devos on Casual DV Z managed to get through to the jump-off.

Finally, France's Marie Demonte and Forban de Béliard, who started in penultimate position, brought the number of riders in the jump-off to six.

Six riders - four men and two women - with one ambition: to win a thrilling class that went right down to the wire.

Mégane Moissonnier was first to start in the jump-off and took every chance, squeezing every turn as tightly as she could while maintaining a fast pace. Unfortunately, the French rider's hopes were dashed by two fallen bars, but she still managed to put pressure on her rivals, because the options taken by Equita rider forced Scott Brash to use a similar strategy. Indeed, the options were so demanding that the world number one found himself in the rare position of having a refusal and then knocked off two bars.



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Thibeau Spits, who started third, chose to ride tight lines without pushing too much on the pace and recorded the first double clear round of the afternoon; the only one!

Although the Swiss rider Martin Fuchs, with Conner Jei, managed to shave 1.32 seconds off the time, a bar on the second part of the last obstacle deprived him of victory. A similar fate befell Pieter Devos, who made two mistakes.

France's Marie Demonte was last to take to the arena, all smiles as the crowd cheered her on. She was more hesitant in her approach to the jump-off and received four penalty points for a fallen bar. Finally, her time was slower than that of Martin Fuchs and she finished third on the podium.

This wonderful podium rounded off two weeks of top-level sport at the fifth *Printemps des Sports Équestres*.

What they said:

Thibeau Spits (BEL), winner of the GL events Grand Prix with Impress-K van't Kattenheye Z:
"I didn't really know what to expect. After Paris, my horse took a bit of a break for breeding, so he was a bit tense and not very concentrated. I was already happy that we managed to qualify for the Grand Prix. But today he was calmer. He is also the kind of horse that knows exactly what he has to do. He jumped magnificently. I didn't know if my jump-off would be fast enough with the riders that were to come after me. Fortunately, I managed a double clear round. Of course, the world championships remain the goal for this year and results like today give you confidence. So, I think I've got a good chance of being there and doing well."

Martin Fuchs (SUI), second in the GL events Grand Prix with Conner Jei:

"Of course, I always prefer to win, but second place is still good, because it's not often that you come second with four penalty points in the jump-off. Well done to Thibeau. I love the way he rides and his horse. They are a great couple. I love to see young people like him succeed. I used to be the youngest, but now I'm almost twice his age (laughs). It's good to see this new generation pushing us to do better and putting on a great show like Thibeau did today."

Marie Demonte (FRA), third in the GL events Grand Prix with Forban de Beliard:

"It's been a wonderful day. It hasn't really sunk in yet, but it's a great team victory. I've had this horse since he was 6 years old. We've always believed in him. Edouard Coupérie gave me the opportunity to go and prepare him in Ocala and Wellington, where he jumped in some big competitions. He arrived here having not competed for a month, so he's pretty fresh. All the experience he gained over there, he showed today in the Fontainebleau."



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Gregory Bodo (FRA), CSI5* course designer:

"I was really looking forward to coming back to the Grand Parquet in this beautiful green setting. The arena lived up to all our expectations. The ground is so firm under foot it's incredible. What we wanted for this first international event in the Main Arena was for the horses to be able to express themselves in a reassuring and safe environment. We wanted to progressively make things harder as we moved towards the 5 Grand Prix, without going over the top. Half the starters in this class received 4 penalty points but there were no retirements, which is rare. I think the riders enjoyed riding in the Main Arena, and we also enjoyed watching them in the Grand Prix."*

Sylvie Robert, President of GL events Equestrian Sport

"I would like to thank the International Equestrian Federation, the French Equestrian Federation and the Chairman of the GL events Group for their confidence. I would also like to thank the riders who treated us to some great sport with an absolutely incredible line-up, and all the partners and organisations with whom we work hand in hand to make this event possible. We're delighted to be finally back in the Main Arena at the Grand Parquet. This iconic arena was brought back up to the highest modern sports standards thanks to the expertise of the Normandie Drainage and Natural Grass teams, under the supervision of Michel Poncelet. We saw that the horses jumped incredibly well, so we're delighted to be able to provide such good conditions. My heartfelt thanks go to all my teams, who did a remarkable job to ensure that this amazing event could be held in such excellent conditions. We'll see you next year. And I'm pleased to confirm that the dates have been fixed for the event here until 2030."

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About GL events Equestrian Sport

 GL events Equestrian Sport, the GL events Group's equestrian department, is acknowledged for its expertise throughout the world. The GL events Group has been involved in all the equestrian events at the Olympic and Paralympic Games since 1992.

Since its creation, GL events Equestrian Sport has played an active role in supporting equestrian sports, while placing constant emphasis on the well-being of horses. The team is involved in the long-term international development of equestrian disciplines, as an organiser and overlay-provider to tier-1 events.

- Organiser of Equita Lyon and the Longines Equita Lyon CHI,
- Creator and organiser of the Printemps des Sports Équestres in Fontainebleau,
- Provider and partner of the Saut Hermès at the Grand Palais, on behalf of the Maison Hermès,
- Partner to the French Equestrian federation for the Masters Pro,
- And partner to the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) for the World Cup Finals in 2014 and 2018.

GL events Equestrian Sport and its expert teams also contributed to the success of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, notably working on the equestrian and para-dressage events organised in the magical setting of the Gardens of the Château de Versailles.

In 2026, GL events Equestrian Sport will be organising the CDIO5*, France's official dressage competition, for the first time at the Grand Parquet de Fontainebleau, as part of the Printemps des Sports Équestres.



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