

## Features

# Equestrian Elite Meeting in Geneva

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30.01.2010 **In April, for the second time since 1996, Geneva will be host to the show jumping world cup final. The qualifying tournaments in 14 leagues have still to be completed. Last year's champion, Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum, has already secured her spot. The Concours Hippique International de Genève, which is usually held in December, is the most prestigious equestrian event sponsored by Credit Suisse, aside from the White Turf events in St. Moritz.**

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It was in May 1978 at Windsor Castle that then-president of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), Prince Philip, gave his blessing to the proposal put forth by Switzerland's Max E. Ammann regarding his plans for a new world cup – albeit with just one, but naturally a very important proviso: The Prince single-handedly adapted the regulations, which had been drafted in American English (Ammann had worked in New York for 10 years), into what he termed "proper English." Apart from that, the Swiss equestrian expert's idea for enhancing the show jumping winter season had received broad support when he first voiced it at the Summer Olympics in Montreal in 1976.

### Hugo Simon Makes Sports History

After qualifying at jumping events in Europe and North America, Austria's Hugo Simon, riding the legendary Gladstone, won the first world cup in Gothenburg, Sweden. And it was the same rider who also rose to the top in Geneva in 1996 on the Hanoverian chestnut gelding E.T. ahead of John Whitaker and Franke Sloothaak. Incidentally, Simon won a third final the next year, again in Gothenburg. He thus continues to rank at the top of the all-time best list, along with Brazilian Rodrigo Pessoa (1998/1999/2000), and Germany's Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum (2005/2008/2009). Two-time winners include America's Conrad Homfeld (1980/1985), Canada's Ian Millar (1988/1989), England's John Whitaker (1990/1991), and Germany's Marcus Ehning (2003/2006).

### Two Swiss World Cup Winners So Far

The list of world cup winners reads like a Who's Who of equestrian sport. It's satisfying to see that the list of past winners includes two Swiss – Beat Mändli (2007, Las Vegas) and Markus Fuchs (2001, Gothenburg). Mändli and

Fuchs, together with Lesley McNaught, Willi Melliger, and Steve Guerdat secured a total of nine podium appearances between them. Now hopes are naturally high for continued success at the final on home soil – April 14 to 17 in Geneva. Things are looking good. At the end of 2009, Pius Schwizer (2nd) and Daniel Etter (6th) looked set to qualify in the Western European League, and more Swiss are in the running. To begin with, in this, the most important of the 14 qualifying leagues, the best 18 show jumpers have qualified for the final; secondly, the organizing federation has two wildcard spots available.

### **Pleasant Anticipation of Magical Riders**

We won't know exactly how the starting field in Geneva is going to look until just shortly beforehand. The final Western European League event, the CHI-W in s'Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands, isn't scheduled to finish until March 28. But it's important to highlight the dates for the fast-approaching five-day extravaganza in one's calendar already. And it will certainly be spectacular, as the total of three rounds of scored jumping are packed with drama, and the support events are well worth seeing.

Particularly noteworthy is the "Flying Frenchman," Lorenzo, who will transform the circuit into a show arena. Lorenzo is also known as the "Petit Prince de Camargue" (Little Prince of Camargue), and "der magische Reiter" (The Magical Rider). Naturally, the anticipation will be high. The detailed program and definitive field of competitors can be found at the event homepage.

Looking further ahead, the 50th CHI-W will be held in Geneva in December, and in 2011 the FEI will be celebrating its 90th anniversary. By then, Max E. Ammann will have completed his three-volume chronicle of equestrian sport. The 2010 world cup will doubtlessly receive a mention...