

ROGER-YVES BOST GIVES HIS NAME A BOOST

THE FINAL SERIES OF THE GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR (GCT) WAS FOR THE FIRST TIME HELD IN ABU DHABI AT AL FORSAN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS RESORT. IT SAW TWO BATTLES UNFOLD FOR SUPREMACY WITH A 400,000 EURO REWARD THAT THE TOP WORLD RANKED RIDERS AIMED FOR. THE FINAL SIMULTANEOUSLY PROVIDED THE SHOWDOWN FOR THE 2011 GCT SERIES TITLE THAT SAW THE APPOINTMENT OF JUST TWO RIDERS: AUSTRALIAN EDWINA TOPS-ALEXANDER AND GERMAN LUDGER BEERBAUM.

The GCT finale in Abu Dhabi played out between eight riders who jumped double clear to go through to the jump-off to determine the ultimate winner. The competition provided all the excitement that spectators could wish for.

Cassio Rivetti riding Temple Road and competing for Ukraine was out to set the tone early on and looked quite quick over the first few fences; they knocked down some but kept maximising the time going through the beam in 44.15.



Roger Yves-Bost



Switzerland's Clarissa Crotta was the first to jump clear, setting the time standard of 49.92 with West Side V Meerputhoeve. Sweden's Rolf-Goran Bengtsson, in the best form at the moment with Casall La Silla, took all the shorter tracks and galloped the long ride down to the last to be clear and faster in 43.28. Dutch Maikel van der Vleuten on his young stallion VDL Groep Verdi, was forward and jumping very confidently; he does not often compete at the GCT tour but was placed third in Valencia. Maikel fell short with the time of 44.14 although the clear round was much appreciated by his sponsor Wim van der Leege who had come to Abu Dhabi to support his VDL riders.



▲ Clarissa Crotta riding West Side V

Quicker and quicker the competitors came, with Brazilian Alvaro de Miranda blitzing the time with the big grey gelding AD Ashleigh Drossel and galloping to the last to be home in 42.20. The horse has been resting with an injury since Monaco and recently, he came back into very good form. Master of speed, France's Roger Yves Bost turned shorter to nearly every fence and the round looked sharp; he made an inside turn after the second last before riding hand and heel to the last. They were home free and super quick in 41.14. The second of the VDL riders to the jump off was Leopold van Aston; he took a speedy turn around with his mare VDL Groep Quinara. The horse, normally utilised for speed classes, put in a fantastic round with one fence down and the time of 44.15.



▲ Rolf-Goran Bengtsson riding Casall La Silla

Saudi Arabia's Khalid Al Eid, riding Presley Boy and being the crowd's favourite, jumped with vision and range to have enough goods to win. He risked nearly everything and was clear with the second fastest time of 42.08.

It was a glorious win for Roger Yves-Bost and Ideal de la Loge, who had won the first big class of the GCT season in Doha and now the last class of the season, the Grand Prix of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Jaeger-LeCoultre presented the Frenchman with a GCT engraved Reverso wristwatch. The Jaeger-LeCoultre Atmos clock, beautifully showcased in a GCT personalised casing came into Edwina Tops-Alexander's possession for winning the 2011 series.

This final marked the first year for the Global Champions Tour to hold any of its competitions in Abu Dhabi, and will be doing so for another four years. In 2012, the tour will capture new audiences at new destinations: Wiesbaden (GER), Lausanne (SUI), Vienna (AUT) and Shanghai (CHN). The tour also continues to create long term legacies with sporting partners in Doha (QAT), Valencia (ESP), Hamburg (GER), Cannes (FRA), Monte Carlo (MON), Chantilly (FRA), Valkenswaard (NED), and Abu Dhabi (UAE). 



Khalid Al Eid riding Presley Boy



▲ Sergio Alvarez Moya



▲ Yves-Bost receiving the Jaeger-LeCoultre engraved Reverso wristwatch



▲ Arabian horse display in Al Forsan International Sports Resort, Abu Dhabi



▲ 2011 GCT title winners with the President Jan Tops



Al Forsan International Sports Resort arena

All photos by Stefano Grasso