

LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR FINAL
SCOTT BRASH
NARROWLY RETAINS HIS TITLE IN DOHA



BRITAIN'S WORLD NO1 SCOTT BRASH HAS SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED HIS TITLE AND BEEN CROWNED 2014 LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR CHAMPION. THE 2012 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST TOOK 4TH PLACE IN THE DOHA GRAND PRIX GIVING HIM A ONE POINT ADVANTAGE OVER FOUR-TIME OLYMPIC MEDALLIST, GERMANY'S LUDGER BEERBAUM AND FINISHING ON THE SAME POINTS AS RIVAL SWEDEN'S ROLF-GÖRAN BENGTSSON, WHO WAS THE EVENTUAL CLASS WINNER WITH CASALL ASK.

Due to Brash having more wins than Bengtsson this season, he takes the championship from the charismatic Swede who was in this exact same position when he was runner-up to Australia's Edwina Tops-Alexander in 2012. Brash picked up an excruciating time fault in the Final's first round which put him out of the final jump-off and denied him the chance to try for an incredible fourth LGCT Grand Prix gold medal this season.

Championship Leader Beerbaum did not go through to the second round of the Final Grand Prix of the season. The star picked up 16 faults in the first round with his stallion Zinedine, his substitute ride when his top horse Chiara was not 100% fit to compete. Beerbaum led the Championship by just 12 points, but collected no more points here in the Grand Prix of the LGCT in Doha. Both Beerbaum and Brash named Bengtsson's Casall ASK as the best horse in this three-way race and their predictions really rang true. Putting in one of only two triple clears, the other being Portugal's Luciana Diniz with Fit For Fun who took 2nd place while Canada's Yann Candele with Showgirl took 3rd with four faults, the Swede always looked like the one to beat. However, the night belonged to the incredible, unbeatable combination of Brash with Lady Kirkham and Lady Harris' Hello Sanctos, a pair who once again proved to be the Champion of Champions on the 2014 LGCT.



Jan Tops



Scott Brash



Course designer Ullano Vezzani



THE FIRST ROUND OF THE GRAND PRIX FIRST:

Remarkably, a few of the world-class field managed to jump clean in the first round built by Italy's Uliano Vezzani. Just five progressed to the second round with a zero score; such was the technicality and size of the course. It was clear the course designer was out to sort the best from the rest in this final test of the season. Riders with less experience at this, the very highest level of the sport, or with younger horses not yet seasoned at top level, struggled with the demands of the course. The time allowed was also tight and along with Brash and Hello Sanctos, Constant van Paesschen and Citizenguard Toscan Sainte Hermelle, and Bassem Mohammed and Victoria, also picked up a single time fault.

The first three fences on the course were relatively straight-forward and on sweeping turns, though some horses looked closely at the Al Shaqab fence at No2, where both the USA's Kent Farrington and Uceko and Sweden's Henrik von Eckermann and Cantinero were eliminated. But it was a meaty related distance to the Longines treble combination across the massive arena where the first big question was asked and the two combinations that followed where most riders picked up faults.

THE SECOND ROUND:

Of the five riders through to the top 18 with a clean score, Bengtsson and Casall ASK looked to be the classiest combination. However, they were joined by some tough competitors, including reigning European Champion, France's Roger-Yves Bost and Qoud Coeur de la Loge, in-form Diniz and Fit For Fun, Yann Candele and Showgirl and most threateningly last previous night's winner, Germany's Daniel Deusser and Cornet D'Amour. Three riders were close on their heels with a single time-fault, waiting for a slip-up: Brash, Van Paesschen and Mohammed.

The second round was a twisting course with awkward lines and another tight time allowed, but it was much friendlier than the first round. The fences were more spaced out about the arena and open to an attacking pace of riding. Bassem Mohammed with Victoria was the first to jump a double clear carrying just their single time fault from the first round to eventually finish 5th.

Brash and Hello Sanctos also jumped a beautiful second clean round to stay only on one time fault collected in the first round, but his faster time put him just ahead of the Qatari. Diniz and Fit For Fun were the first double clear, while Bosty and Qoud de la Loge and Daniel and Cornet D'Amour both had four faults. Diniz was joined in the final jump-off by Canada's Candele with Showgirl and the eventual winner Bengtsson.



Rolf-Goran Bengtsson



Ludger Beerbaum



THE JUMP-OFF:

The jump-off course was a mix of daring turns and brave gallops which was open to attack from a courageous rider. Diniz set the pace in the three-horse jump off with her lovely little chestnut and really put the pressure on the two to follow her with a time of 43.85s. Candele pushed his horse as much as he could but lowered an upright on a turn to finish 3rd in 43.20s. Bengtsson and Casall ASK set off like they meant business and the stallion looked like he would never touch a pole. There were some gasps from the spectators at some of the Swede's bold lines and turns, but Casall rose to the occasion with great style to take the final victory of the season in a time of 40.46s.

PRESS CONFERENCE:

SCOTT BRASH: "I nearly slapped myself after the Final after getting a time fault in the first round. Sanctos has been incredible all year. I just have to pinch myself and enjoy it while I have him, those sort of horses don't come along too often so you have to make most of it and enjoy it while I have him. He is a winner. Whenever he comes out he wins - his strike rate is phenomenal. He's an incredible horse and I am lucky to be riding him. There is still a lot I want to do in my career. If I can still be top of the sport like Ludger is when I get to Ludger's age, I'll be thrilled with myself. There are still a lot of things I want to do. I will be targeting this series next year. It's a wonderful series. I think I speak on behalf of all the riders when I say it's a privilege to be part of the sport at this time with what Jan and his team have done. Plus we are now getting paid sums of money that you could only dream about. For sure, I think it's bought the sport to a whole new level and I will be aiming for it next year."

ROLF-GÖRAN BENGTSOON: "I did everything I could today, that was my only chance, to fly here and know you have to win to get one point ahead of Ludger it's a dream and not going to happen. It went like that today - my horse was fantastic, but Scott jumped clear again as he has many times before, ending up on the same amount of points as me, but he has three wins and I only have two, so it was really close."

LUDGER BEERBAUM: "I have to be very honest, I don't like to mess about, I am disappointed not to win. On the other hand, I have to say that I have to accept these two guys were world-class. To drop from 1st to 3rd because of such performances makes it a little easier to accept. Respect to them, it was fantastic to watch. I have to accept they were better."

FAHAD AL QAHTANI: "Firstly, thank to everyone who contributed to this success. The list is endless. One component is our volunteers, who did a fantastic job to make this happen. Congratulations to the magnificent riders who made an exceptional show. These shows are



Daniel Deusser



Sheikh Ali Al Thani



enjoyed by our riding academy students and I think they have a lot to aspire to. Al Shaqab is a multipurpose venue, but the soul is based in equestrian sport and we are yet to test the full potential.”

CHARLES VILLOZ: “Let me say on behalf of Longines and Swatch, thanks to the athletes for the great sport and a very tense final, I really enjoyed the show. I would also like to thank our technicians who provide the time keeping and support the team throughout the year. Al Shaqab is a great venue and the guests that we had today enjoyed it very much.”

JAN TOPS: “I said to Scott, you are a very good calculator. He made it just by a point and all season he was very measured and had his horse in very good shape. I haven’t seen him jump like that the last three months. Scott knew what he had to do, he is very professional and good under pressure, and it was very close. Rolf couldn’t do better, he won the class and it was a great performance. For Ludger, he was consistent all year, but his horse (Chiara) was not top fit at the last-minute, but he is a professional so he understands how it is. These three are amazing riders and have ridden fantastic all year and we couldn’t have wished for a better ending. Also I want to thank Al Shaqab for always trying to improve this facility, it is all first class, state-of-the-art. It’s a unique place that everybody enjoys coming to. Also thank you to Longines, our title sponsor, who support us - we need this kind of sponsor at this level and we could not do it without them, so thank you very much.”

“For Bassem (Hassan Mohammed), being 4th behind these riders is very special. This is as good as he could have done this year and it shows he is being consistent in these difficult classes and I have good faith in our riders, and we will hope to see them on the podium next year. I believe in them and it’s nice to work with them.”

“I can say in this Tour there are no competitions better than others, we are very diverse - a final event this tense is very special. But when you win this series you are a real champion in the sport - we have such a variety of arenas and settings, you need a horses that can perform in different circumstances. When you win this kind of series you know you are a horse and rider that’s really special. To be consistent all year, you have to be a great manager of your horse. You can see from the riders here, they are master riders with fantastic horses.” 🏆

**This article was first published on:
<http://www.globalchampionstour.com/>*

***The final took place in Doha, Qatar, from November 13 - 15*

****For full results, see: <http://tinyurl.com/qzrbgh7>*

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Bassem Mohammed

