



LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR FINAL

**LUCIANA DINIZ IS
CROWNED 2015 CHAMPION**





Scott Brash on Hello Sanctos



Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum on Fibonacci 17

LUCIANA DINIZ AND FIT FOR FUN TOOK THE 2015 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER WINNING THE FINAL LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR GRAND PRIX OF THE SEASON IN SENSATIONAL STYLE. THE INCREDIBLE SPORTING ACTION WENT RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE IN DOHA, QATAR, AND THE TOP THREE CONTENDERS HAD FANS ON THE EDGE OF THEIR SEATS UNTIL THE FINAL MOMENT OF THE FINAL ROUND.

It was a magnificent finale at AL SHAQAB with all eyes on the three riders who had battled through the series to be in with a chance of the championship crown - Scott Brash, Luciana Diniz and Rolf-Göran Bengtsson. On the night it was Luciana and her chestnut mare that emerged as the supreme combination of the high octane season.

The Royal Family of Qatar attended the Longines Global Champions Tour event for the second day running and witnessed three strong performances from Qatari national riders, including Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani who rode an impressive double clear in the Grand Prix. His Highness The Father Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned and Sheikh Joaan Bin Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani enthusiastically applauded Sheikh Ali and watched

the championship prize giving ceremony along with guests in a special cultural VIP tent next to the arena.

It was an epic night of top-level sport at full throttle rounding off a spectacular season. From the opening moments, when the world of show jumping was stunned by the new venue on Miami Beach, the 15-event-circuit powered on to stops including Shanghai, Monaco, Paris, Rome and the final in Doha. Fans across the world grew in numbers during the season watching the increasing international TV coverage and live streaming on GCT TV.

All eyes were on Doha and the three who could take the 2015 season title - Scott Brash (GBR), Luciana Diniz (POR) and Rolf-Göran Bengtsson (SWE). The first round course on the sweeping 520m track in the AL SHAQAB arena was a formidable test; it

demanded ultra-precision and concentration from both horse and rider. In particular, the last line of the course and the triple combination with two oxers was a strong test for the best riders in the world as they competed to earn their place in round two. The bright colours of the fences, often depicting traditional Arabic designs, were also a test for the horses, and the stunning floodlit arena set the backdrop for a dramatic 2015 season finale.

Course designer Uliano Vezzani produced a fittingly formidable first round course for the final showdown of the year. It was described by show jumping legend Ludger Beerbaum: "I definitely believe it is big enough, demanding enough. It may not be super technical but the size is serious."

FIRST ROUND

The time allowed in the first round was tight, with 78 seconds given in total for this challenging course. Doda de Miranda (BRA) was the first to go clear with AD Living the Dream, but picked up an unlucky time fault. He was soon joined by Rene Tebbel (UKR) and Hamad Ali Mohamed Al Attiyah (QAT) who rode clear with Appagino, to the delight of his home

crowd, however all were just caught out by the time allowed.

Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum (GER) was the first to go clear with Fibonacci, and she was delighted with her 10 year old grey gelding. Soon to follow was Qatar's own Bassem Hassan Mohammed with California, and the crowd erupted as their home rider flew over the last.

First to go of the title contenders was Ranking leader Scott Brash (GBR). He and Hello Sanctos flew around but clipped a fence, picking up four faults to the groan of the audience and his fans around the world. The temperature rose as Rolf-Göran Bengtsson (SWE) and Casall ASK were the next title contender to enter the ring, knowing that he would need to win the Grand Prix to be in with a chance of the Champion of Champions Crown.

With the consistency they've shown throughout the season, Rolf and Casall ASK rode a stunning clear - fastest to do so at that point in the competition and pushing Scott down to 15th. As the final riders took their turn, Edwina Tops-Alexander (AUS) clipped a fence meaning that Scott would go through to the



Rolf-Göran Bengtsson on Casall ASK



Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani on First Devision

second round, finishing in 18th place and keeping his title hopes alive.

Luciana Diniz (POR) and Fit For Fun 13 were second last to go, and rode a brilliant clear round, the quickest of the riders so far and meaning that the three title contenders would go through to the second round as the intensity rose. The heat was on, with Rolf-Göran Bengtsson needing a double clear in order to go through to the jump-off with a chance of taking the title.

SECOND ROUND

The top eighteen went through to the second round, with Ranking leader Scott Brash and Hello Sanctos first in and with everything to do to keep his title hopes alive. The second layout was, a big but fairly, straightforward course with three big fences to start and a generous time of 77 seconds. A rather awkward line to the treble combination would require plenty of care and scope and a 1,60m vertical penultimate fence caught out a few of the top riders.

Scott rode a beautiful round all the way up until the penultimate fence, just clipping the pole and finishing one eight faults in total with a time of 62.69s. However

as the class progressed, the riders to follow also had fences down, leaving Scott at the top of the eight faulters.

The experienced Ludger Beerbaum (GER) and Chiara were first to go clear, and carried through their four faults after a careful round, but Bertram Allen (IRL) soon pipped his time with the talented Molly Malone V. Rene Tebbel (UKR) and Forlap also went clear however with their one time fault carried over were soon pushed down the order as Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani (QAT) and First Devision rode a stunning double clear round, watch on by members of the Qatar Royal Family. The first to ride double clear was followed by Meredith Michaels-Berbaum (GER) and Fibonacci. Despite a heart-stopping moment at the double, it meant there would be a jump-off.

Rolf-Göran Bengtsson (SWE) and Casall ASK were next to go and rode an unbelievable course earning his place in the final round. His title hopes still open; he was followed by Luciana Diniz (POR) who raised the temperature yet higher still by following him into the jump-off. Scott was pushed down the order to 8th, meaning he was no longer in contention for the 2015 Title and it was a two horse race to the finish.

THE JUMP OFF

The final jump off of the season was kicked off by Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani however he had two down despite a valiant effort to reach the podium. Meredith Michaels-Berbaum (GER) rode some stunning angles, galloping to the last and flying home with a formidable time of 36.55s and setting the bar for the final two to follow.

The incredible pair of Rolf-Göran Bengtsson and Casall ASK galloped around the course, cutting out strides and pushing to beat Meredith's impressive time. But it wasn't to be, and the formidable duo crossed the line in 37.01 seconds just tenths off the lead. Last to go Luciana Diniz knew that the title was hers, but set out to win the Longines Global Champions Tour Grand Prix of Doha and did so in emphatic style, with the brave Fit For Fun 13 jumping her heart out for the final, crossing the line in 36.10s.

It was a dramatic final showdown to what is been an incredible season, with all the emphasis on the top level of sport and the high calibre profile of the Longines Global Champions Tour.

It was announced that AL SHAQAB will be the stage

for the 2016 championship final of the Longines Global Champions Tour, which will include the new Global Champions League Team Competition launching next year. Speaking about hosting the final again next year, Group Executive Director Administration of Qatar Foundation and AL SHAQAB Fahad Saad Al Qahtani, said: "It is an honour for us, we are very proud of what you achieved."

PRESS CONFERENCE

Group Executive Director Administration of Qatar Foundation and AL SHAQAB Fahad Saad Al Qahtani said "Let me take this opportunity to thank His Highness the Father Emir, Her Highness Sheikhha Moza, Sheikh Joaan and Hamad Al Attiya, the President of the Federation for the support they have given this magnificent event. There is no doubt, for the people even who are not related to the equestrian industry, they had an amazing time, so we all achieved what we wanted. It was exciting moment, an amazing evening and it cannot be better than what we have seen tonight. It is an amazing formula we have achieved tonight and amazing infrastructure. The riders handled the pressure amazingly. The support we had from everybody was outstanding and we came off with a beautiful picture

of the sport.”

President of Longines: Walter Von Känel, “I am so pleased that my colleague said what he did. It is a pleasure to thank the Global Champions Tour, to thank the locals, to thank all the riders and the horses, thank you to all the volunteers and together we made a big push for the promotion of this equestrian land for jumping and this is fantastic. The spirit, the competition, no accident - this, for me, a farmer’s son, is probably the greatest pleasure I have. I would like to say to Luciana that you and your horse are really a great love story - Fit For Fun is Fit For ‘Love’ with your horse - congratulations. It’s nice to be here and thank you to all the locals and everybody for the promotion of equestrian in this beautiful country.”

Longines Global Champions Tour Founder and President: Jan Tops “As trainer of the Qatari squad, they have had a fantastic season, especially this year - 5th in the overall, today double clear - to beat all these people is very difficult, but at least they are in the game, they are getting good experience, they are riding with more confidence and I am very proud with the way they have developed the last few years. The aim was to qualify for the Olympics, achieve good results in the Longines Global Champions Tour - that’s what they have achieved.”

“Ten years ago we started with six events, this year we’ve done 15 events, with two new events in Miami and Rome. We have very much established our events this year. The quality is much higher, we have a great team of people, our followers on television; the live-streaming is tremendous - it has been growing these past years and if you see what we have achieved in the last 10 years I think it is amazing. We are not tennis, golf or Formula 1 just yet, but the gap is not what it used to be. We have constant development for this year and our sport has a big future.”

“These three riders have been really dominating the sport throughout the whole year. Luciana’s horse was on great form to win today and overall, Rolf has been every time so consistent, everybody wanted him to win, he has been second twice. Also Scott, he has won two times but today he wanted to be friendly to Luciana to allow her to win today! I think they have all between them been by far the best of all the riders.”

Uliano Vezzani, Course Designer: “For me today was not easy but with the great riders who were here, it was amazing. I’m very happy, for me, for the Longines Global Champions Tour. We had great sport. The arena was fantastic, we had also fantastic fences.”

Rolf-Göran Bengtsson, 2015 Longines Global Champions Tour Bronze Medallist: “First of all, I want to say that I really enjoyed doing the Longines

Global Champions Tour and it is a fantastic thing. We go to very nice locations, where we make the sport famous everywhere. I didn’t go directly in the beginning; I started a little but later I have been many times so consistent. To reach third place in the end, I’m still happy with that, of course I wanted to win but that’s life.”

2015 Longines Global Champions Tour Silver Medallist: Scott Brash said “I had a silly fence in the first round, coming out of the double. Ok, this is showjumping so we know it can happen. So I started the second round thinking that I had to be the fastest of the four faulters to have any chance so I went as fast as I could and it’s the reason I had a fence down. But Sanctos has been wonderful all year.”

“I must say I think Luciana really deserves it, she’s been so consistent the whole year, as has Rolf. I think Fit For Fun jumped unbelievable today, it was actually an absolute joy to watch. They jumped fantastic, as did Rolf, so they really deserved it. In the last three legs of the Longines Global Champions Tour they just ran away it, so it’s all credit to both of them.”

2015 Longines Global Champions Tour Gold Medallist: Luciana Diniz said “I was in a winning mood spirit today and riding Fit For ‘Love’ makes my life easier. It’s true, if you ride with love and you believe in what you do it makes your life easier. So this success to be here, I am not alone in that - I have to thank all of you as well, the Longines Global Champions Tour, all the supporters, Doha, AL SHAQAB. And now my team, my fantastic horses, Fit for ‘Love’, Winning-mood who has been in great shape this year. I love this name by the way! I think we have arrived with a different story in our sport, with a new image as well for the sport - I’m not saying it’s going to be like tennis one day but I think we’re respectable now, people are looking for us with a different spirit now and I’m very happy to be here today. These two boys were gentlemen today and let the lady be first so I’m very happy with that.”

“Scott and Rolf are so good, if I would think about focusing on them and what they are going to do I would be lost. So I just said I’d focus on myself and what my horse can do and I’m just going to be with her there, together we are one and that was my strategy today - just focus on the both of us. Fit For Love was in love with me.”

This article was first published on:

<http://www.globalchampionstour.com/>

The final took place in Doha, Qatar, from November 12 - 15

For full results, see: <http://tinyurl.com/q6y76ya>

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Luciana Diniz on Fit For Fun