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HIPPODROME D'AUTEUIL

LES 48H DE L'OBSTACLE

un WEEK-END à la MONTAGNE



DES ÉMOTIONS À TOUTE ALLURE

Press Release

Sunday, 16 November, 2025

48H DE L'OBSTACLE – Auteuil

PRIX MAURICE GILLOIS – GRAND STEEPEL-CHASE DES 4 ANS

Leader Sport dominates his generation – though not without a scare



Approaching the last fence of the Prix Maurice Gillois – Grand Steeple-Chase des 4 Ans, two horses were still locked in battle: the filly **La Palmeraie** (Saint des Saints), who had taken off in front down the back straight... and the hot favourite **Leader Sport** (Nirvana du Berlais), who had first dawdled at the rear as if uninterested in the race, then frightened his supporters by making a mistake at the *rivière des tribunes*. But a champion is always a champion: by the end of the back straight, Leader Sport steadily drew closer before asserting decisively on the run-in.

#48hObstacle

La Palmeraie produced an excellent performance to finish second, never giving up at any point. **Nirvalla** (also by Nirvana du Berlais, like the winner) finished a clear third after a patient move forward in the latter part of the race.

Leader Sport could well be a candidate for the future Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris, a race his trainer Daniela Mele already won in 2023 with **Rosario Baron**.

Official result

PRIX MAURICE GILLOIS – GRAND STEEPLE-CHASE DES 4 ANS

1st LEADER SPORT (Léo-Paul BRECHET)

2nd LA PALMERAIE (Bertrand LESTRADE)

3rd NIRVALLA (Ludovic PHILIPPERON)

Time: 5'46"23. Margins: 4 – 12 – 2 1/2 – 7 1/2.

Reactions from the connections

Daniela Mele, trainer of Leader Sport, 1st (Gavray-sur-Sienne, Manche)

"He made a mistake at the water jump. And afterwards, Léo [Léo-Paul Bréchet, his jockey] told him he had to go, and the horse responded. Leader Sport has unbelievable energy, as we saw again today! (...) It's true he didn't break well. We had hoped for a better start. But I think his jockey listened to him and trusted him, which was the right thing to do. (...) For me, having this horse is a real privilege: when you sit on him, it's a palace! I've ridden him myself: even going for a hunting canter is a pleasure. He jumps beautifully. His mind is still a little fragile, but that will improve as he matures."

Walter Connors, owner of Leader Sport, 1st

Deeply moved—shaking, even—the renowned Irish veterinarian and pinhooker said after winning his first Group 1 race:

"It's not a bad thing we didn't sell this one (laughs). It's incredible. Incredible. What a race! He really stayed on so well. A big heart! You know, it's just unbelievable to be here on this podium. It's a great day for us. The fantastic thing with horses is that everyone has an opinion. Including vets! It's tempting to have more horses in France. My daughter keeps telling me I should have a few fillies in training to make broodmares. (...) Winning a Group 1, for me, is unlikely. It's big sport. It's the very top. We're not used, as owners, to shining at this level. Normally, we have point-to-point horses for sale. (...) He could be a Gold Cup horse, you know. He's only four, he's big. If he has luck going forward in his career, anything is possible... Today he was fantastic. His career is certainly ahead of him. He has great stamina and a big engine."

Étienne d'Andigné, trainer of La Palmeraie, 2nd (Le Louroux-Béconnais, Maine-et-Loire)

"She changed the way we are training her. Working her on the turf transformed her, and we also changed her work rider. In the morning, you have to find the right balance: not

pushing her into the red... but making her work enough at the same time. She lost 20 kilos since her last start, which is significant! (...) The heavy ground, combined with the extra work, helped her. She put up a very fine performance. We have no reason to be ashamed of being beaten by a horse of that quality. We might run her in the Prix Morgex afterwards..."

Photo credit: Scoop Dgya



Contact Presse France Galop :

Hélène Dupuy

Mail : hdupuy@france-galop.com

Tél : 06 30 41 85 89