

FRANCE GALOP  
**EMIRATES  
POULES D'ESSAI**

**DIMANCHE  
10 MAI  
2026**

**ENTRÉE &  
CONCERT  
GRATUITS**  
SUR RÉSERVATION  
**DÈS 12 H**

**MUSIC  
TOUR**

HIPPODROME  
PARISLONGCHAMP

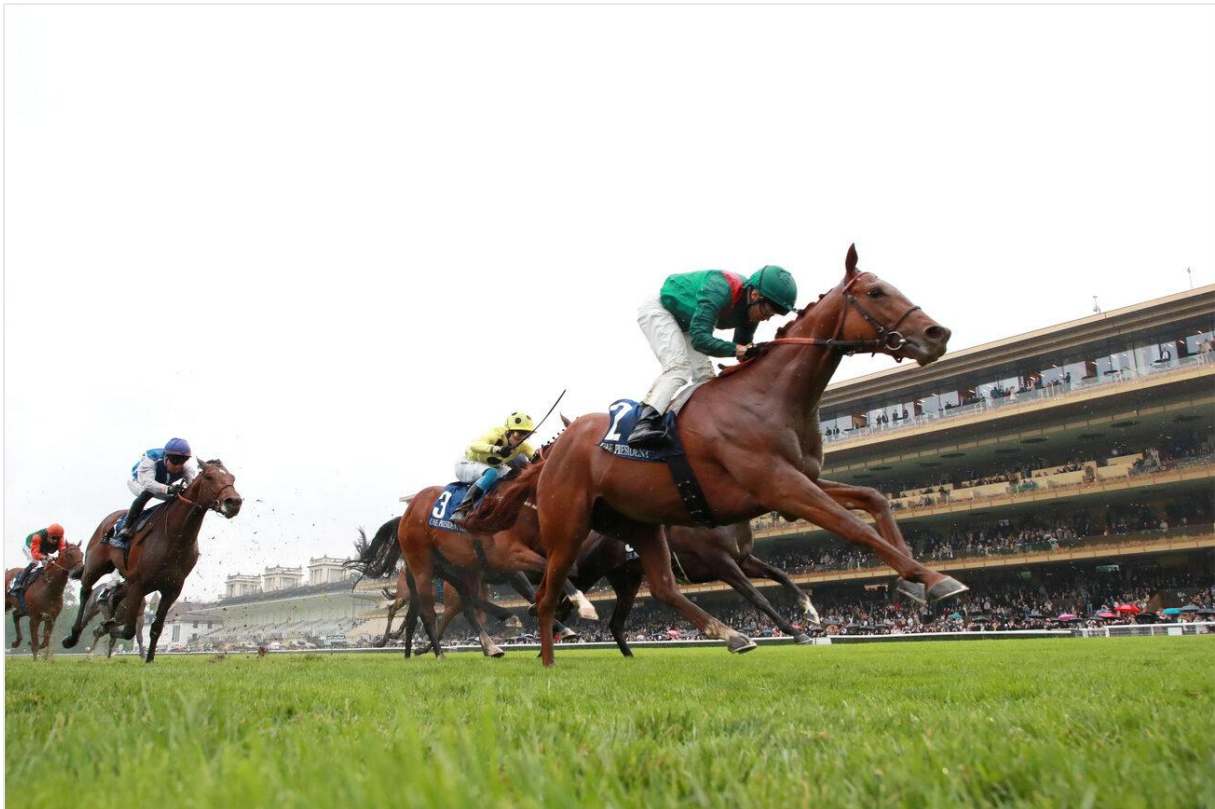


Press Release

Sunday, May 10, 2026

## **EMIRATES POULE D'ESSAI DES POULAINS**

**French-trained Rayif wins the “Poule” like  
a Champion,  
after more than 200 days off!**



Absent from competition for more than 200 days (217 to be exact), the French colt **Rayif**, trained in Chantilly by Francis-Henri Graffard, won Sunday's Emirates Poule d'Essai des Poulains at ParisLongchamp, the European championship over 1,600 metres. And he did it in true champion style!

Taking advantage of his favourable draw in stall 1, Rayif broke well and his jockey Mickaël Barzalona, retained rider for the Aga Khan Studs horses, wisely settled him in third position behind the British runner **Hankelow** and the French colt **Wootton Centurion**, who set a solid pace.

Turning into the home straight, Mickaël Barzalona made perfect use of the open stretch — the inside lane detached from the rail that allows horses to find room along the inside without covering additional ground on the outside. Thanks to this flawless tactical ride, Rayif ended up being the horse who travelled the fewest metres in the race.

By contrast, **Komorebi**, ridden by William Buick, had to bide his time far from the leaders and was still well back when launching his challenge wide on the outside. He finished second after getting the better of long-time leader Hankelow, who battled on bravely to the line.

This victory confirms the exceptional form shown in recent months by owner Aga Khan Studs, trainer Francis-Henri Graffard and jockey Mickaël Barzalona under the famous princely silks. The same trio notably captured the prestigious Japan Cup (Group 1) at the end of 2025 with world champion **Calandagan**.

A sign of this remarkable form: the Aga Khan operation had not won the Poule d'Essai des Poulains since **Sendawar** in 1999, while Francis-Henri Graffard had simply never won the race before.

## **The official result**

### **EMIRATES POULE D'ESSAI DES POULAINS**

1<sup>st</sup> RAYIF (Mickaël Barzalona)

2<sup>nd</sup> KOMOREBI (William Buick)

3<sup>rd</sup> HANKELow (Clifford Lee)

Time: 1'38"63. Margins: 1 – Head - Neck.

## **Quotes from the connections**

### **Francis-Henri Graffard, trainer of Rayif (1<sup>st</sup>), Chantilly (60)**

*"I always prefer to prepare the horses I train with races that gradually bring them towards the major targets. But this time I didn't really have a choice: I was forced to skip the prep races! It wasn't easy. That said, the horse was in very good shape. We needed to find him a race, so we made that decision. Then the rain arrived and complicated things a little for us. But we were fortunate to have a very good draw, which allowed us to race close to the pace. From there, everything unfolded perfectly. The horse was able to quicken again, reaccelerate at the right moment and put everything together perfectly.*

*It's true that I've been enjoying a very good spell over the last few months. We had a solid foundation to work from and we managed to stay faithful to it. Right now, several horses from the stable are performing at a very high level [Francis Graffard also won the Prix de Saint-Georges earlier on the card in the same colours with Rayif's sister, editor's note]. It's hugely satisfying and I hope this momentum continues because it's only the beginning of the season and it's already been a wonderful period for us.*

*I didn't realise it had been so long since an Aga Khan Studs horse won this race [1999 with Sendawar], but this is a very important victory. In the racing industry, producing stallions and helping them establish themselves at stud is essential. With this success, he has clearly earned his place as a future stallion. His sister won the Prix de Saint-Georges earlier today, so this is a family that continues to rise in strength. It's a real source of satisfaction for the whole team because this result rewards an enormous amount of hard work. We'll see how*

*he comes out of the race, but the idea is to continue along this path. The St James's Palace Stakes (Group 1) at Royal Ascot will be his next target."*

**Louise Benard, French representative of Godolphin, owner of Komorebi (2<sup>nd</sup>), Chantilly (60)**

"We are very pleased, he ran extremely well. He found himself a little wide early in the race but once again, just as in the Prix de Fontainebleau, he showed that he never gives up. He really gives everything, with tremendous determination. He was still a bit further back than the others when the sprint began and truly, he showed great tenacity all the way to the line. William Buick said that perhaps slightly quicker ground would have suited him better, in which case he might have shown a sharper turn of foot. But it's still a very fine second place today.

*We believe he can be stepped up in trip. The question is: how far? We'll take our time to analyse things and make a decision, but in any case William Buick was not negative about trying him over a longer distance from a jockey's perspective. The Prix du Jockey Club has not been ruled out at this stage.*

*When you look at his form, he has never finished outside the first two. Last year, we chose not to run him in the end-of-season Group 1 [Qatar Prix Jean-Luc Lagardère] in order to preserve him and give him time to mature. He had a very good winter, which we already saw on his comeback run and which was confirmed again today."*

**Karl Burke, trainer of Hankelow (3<sup>rd</sup>), England**

"Super race. At the 400-metre mark, I thought we might actually win it. But he'll stay further and he simply lacked the winner's turn of foot. He came back again strongly at the finish. I think with another ten strides he might even have regained second place. But he's a very good horse.

*We always believed he needed this type of ground and it was the first time he had raced on it. Longchamp suits my horses very well. We've had a lot of success here. I think he'll come back for the Prix du Jockey Club. But first we'll take him home before making a decision. The French Derby will certainly be high on the list.*

*Maybe the winner is an exceptional horse. Francis [Graffard] can do no wrong at the moment, can he?"*