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48H DE L'OBSTACLE – Auteuil

PRIX LA HAYE JOUSSELIN

Champions gear up for autumn's major showdown

One of the most prestigious and spectacular fixtures of the year at Auteuil Racecourse is fast approaching. A highlight of Les 48H de l'Obstacle, taking place on 14 and 15 November, the Prix La Haye Jousselin is regarded as the autumn counterpart to the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris, held in the spring.

This exceptional race brings together the finest steeplechasers, competing over a demanding course featuring a variety of formidable obstacles. Over a distance of 5,500 metres, the runners must negotiate 22 obstacles, including the famous Rivière des Tribunes, which requires an extraordinary eight-metre-long jump! They will tackle it twice, right in front of the spectators. Classified as a Group 1 race, the highest level of competition in thoroughbred racing, the event represents an outstanding test of stamina, courage and agility for horses and jockeys alike.

With just days to go before the big race, the leading contenders are putting the finishing touches to their preparations. Their trainers welcome us into their yards and share their ambitions.

Arnaud Chaillé-Chaillé and François Pamart, the autumn specialists



The defending champion comes from their yard, and this year they will saddle three contenders for victory! Based in Royan-La Palmyre, in the Charente-Maritime department, Arnaud Chaillé-Chaillé and François Pamart form one of the most formidable partnerships in French jump racing.

Arnaud Chaillé-Chaillé is a leading figure in his profession. Over a career spanning more than thirty years, he has notably won every Group 1 race on the French jump racing calendar! Since January 2025, he has officially shared responsibility for his stable with François Pamart, his trusted colleague of almost

twenty years. A former jockey who went on to become an assistant trainer, Pamart has an in-depth understanding of his partner's training methods.

This year, the pair have three strong contenders in the Prix La Haye Jousselin: Toscana du Berlais, who will attempt to defend his title; Bon Garçon, an impressive runner-up in the most recent Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris; and Kilomètre Illimité, who will be stepping up to this level of competition for the first time.

All three have been specifically prepared for this major target, as François Pamart explains:

"The preparation has gone as well as we could possibly have hoped. All three horses are coming into this race in peak condition. Their final really demanding workouts took place last week. This week is more about maintenance work, keeping up their cardiovascular fitness while also ensuring they stay fresh."

The trainer is particularly confident about the progress his horses have made:

"Our approach really allows the horses to improve from one race to the next. Toscana du Berlais and Bon Garçon made their seasonal reappearances over hurdles before returning to steeplechasing. They didn't win their prep races, but there was still plenty of improvement to come. Kilomètre Illimité finished ahead of them in the Prix Héros XII, probably because he was the most race-fit of the three on the day. We're confident about all three, but everything will need to go smoothly during the race. A lot can happen over 5,500 metres!"

Preparation tailored to autumn racing:

The stable's consistent success towards the end of the year is no coincidence. The groundwork begins several months before the major fixtures, with a proper holiday for the horses.

"Our horses enjoy a period of rest at the end of the spring season, when Auteuil closes. They generally spend six weeks out in the paddocks, grazing and recharging their batteries! This break is essential if they are to perform well in the second half of the year. After that, the fairly deep sand track at Royan Racecourse allows us to focus more on building stamina than on pure speed. As a result, our horses are often particularly comfortable on the more demanding autumn ground, which is usually softer than in spring."

Dominique Bressou, the trainer with three consecutive victories



Based in Dragey-Ronthon, in the Manche department of Normandy, Dominique Bressou ranks among the most successful trainers at Auteuil. He has trained several outstanding champions, including the unforgettable Milord Thomas, with whom he won the Prix La Haye Jousselin three years in succession.

In 2026, he could once again be a leading contender thanks to Royal Saga, who recently won the Prix Héros XII (Group 3), the final preparatory race ahead of the major autumn showdown.

It was an encouraging victory, although his trainer identified a few imperfections in the horse's jumping technique.

"Royal Saga is a better horse than he was at four. I wasn't entirely happy with the way he approached a few obstacles with some hesitation in the Prix Héros XII. He jumped the rail-ditch rather extravagantly and negotiated some fences almost as though he were a novice chaser. But having reacquainted himself with Auteuil's obstacles and experienced the rail-ditch will do him good. Soft, heavy ground should suit him. Everything is looking positive!"

Royal Saga will therefore head into the race with a successful preparation behind him and the prospect of conditions well suited to his abilities on ground softened by the autumn rain.

Gabriel Leenders, chasing a first victory



At 39, Gabriel Leenders has established himself as one of France's leading jump racing trainers. Yet his career could have taken a very different path.

The son of a trainer, he initially intended to become a jockey. However, in 2007, at just 20 years old, a serious accident during a race at Vichy dramatically changed the course of his career. Although he subsequently returned to competitive riding, he eventually hung up his boots and turned to training. After gaining experience with established professionals, he set up his own training operation.

Today, he trains more than a hundred horses at the family estate of Les Landes, in Jarzé, in the Maine-et-Loire department, and regularly features among the ten leading French trainers in his discipline.

One achievement still missing from his record is victory in the Prix La Haye Jousselin. To pursue that ambition, he will rely on Amy du Kiff, who will contest the race for the second consecutive year.

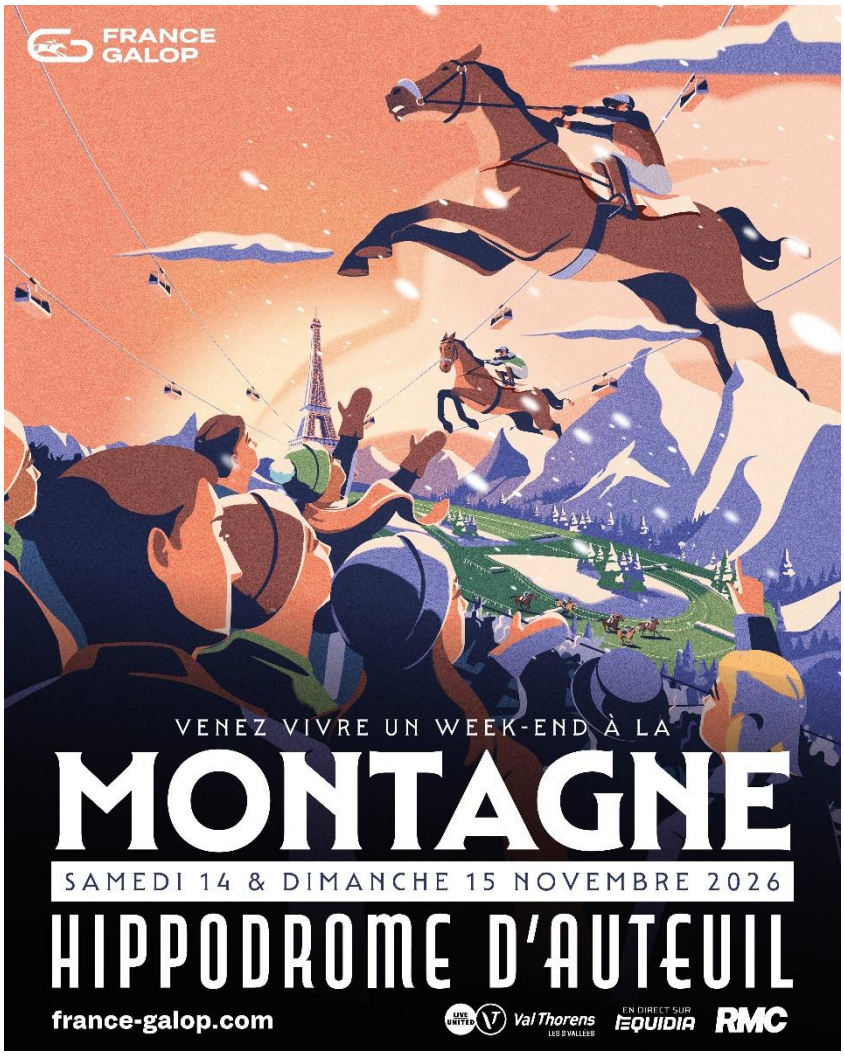
On his first appearance, the horse failed to complete the course. Given a break after finishing sixth in the Prix Ingré (Group 2) in late April, he returned to racing in September. His two comeback runs, both resulting in third-place finishes, have allowed him to gradually regain peak fitness.

Gabriel Leenders approaches this new challenge with confidence, but also with a realistic outlook:

"Amy du Kiff's preparation has been perfect so far. He still has one final gallop scheduled for Tuesday, but everything is going very well. He's improving with every run and really needed those two races to get back to his best. I feel we're reaching peak condition with an ideal preparation behind us. We'll be more of an outsider, but we'll try to spring a surprise. Our aim is to finish fourth or fifth. Anything better would be a bonus."

The trainer also explains the work undertaken to restore his horse's confidence over fences:

"He's a horse who had lost confidence in his jumping over fences. In the Prix Montgomery, we rode him a little too aggressively, thinking it would help us stay in contention if he lost ground at the obstacles. In the end, he used up too much energy. The first two finishers were clearly superior, but we saw the horse back to something like his best. With his experience and reliability, we're hoping for a strong performance."



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