



By Birgit Hügli-Herrmann

The conditions at the final of the 24<sup>th</sup> edition of the Hublot Polo Gold Cup Gstaad could not have been better. Bright sunshine and, as always, many enthusiastic spectators formed the backdrop for the amazing final day. In a high-class final, the Team Clinique La Prairie, led by captain Piero Dillier, beat the Team of the title sponsor Hublot surprisingly with 10-5 goals.

Argentine 6-goaler Lucas Labat

Team Clinique la Prairie wins the 24<sup>th</sup> Hublot Polo Cup in Gstaad

“For me, Gstaad is one of the best tournaments in Europe and to win here was for a long time on Piero’s and my bucket list”





Parade: Team Hublot with Marcel Elser, Marcos Antinori, Nicolas Antinori and Julio Novillo Astrada



The final between Team Clinique La Prairie and Team Hublot: Julio Novillo Astrada (+7), Lucas Labat (+4), Juan Manuel Gonzales (+3)

The joy of victory in Gstaad was written on Lucas Labat's face, when he, Piero Dillier, Andres Bihrer, Bautista Beguerie and Juan Manuel Gonzales standing on the podium, proudly holding up the Hublot watches donated by the title sponsor. Together with his long-term captain Piero Dillier the 43-years old Argentine 6-goaler had already taken several attempts, but now it has finally worked out for the victory in the most highly endowed Swiss summer polo event.

After winning the title in Gstaad, POLO&LUXURY met Lucas Labat. The Argentine 6-goaler spoke with the POLO&LUXURY editor-in-chief Birgit Hügli-Herrmann about his almost two decades relationship with Piero, his famous uncle and mentor, why he loves the Parana River and what plans he has for the time after his career as a polo professional.





Team Clinique La Prairie with Andres Bihrer, Bautista Beguerie, Piero Dillier, Juan Manuel Gonzales and Lucas Labat with the host of the Hublot Polo Gold Cup Pierre Genechand (left)

Lucas, first of all, congratulations on winning the Hublot Polo Gold Cup Gstaad. It was a great final and Piero Dillier earned a title which was missing in your long, successful time together. Could you please give our readers a short summary about this year's final in Gstaad? Thank you very much, Birgit. It was so great to win the title together with my patron Piero, Bautista Beguerie and Juan Manuel Gonzales here in the Swiss alps. This win wasn't complicated because we decided to return the ball from the first shot, and we didn't waste time dribbling. As I have a strong enough swing, my job was to send the ball to my forwards who could then make the goals. This is the type of polo I believe in, and I am convinced that in the future we must return to this kind of open game.

Our team worked together perfectly; I think this team is one of the best I've played with in Europe. On top the weather conditions in Gstaad were ideal, visitors cheered on the teams enthusiastically and the organisation team with president Pierre Genechand as its leader worked as a well-oiled top-machine. In a nutshell: For me, Gstaad is one of the best tournaments in Europe.

You've won so many big tournaments, listing them all is beyond the scope of this interview. Which successes are the most important for you personally? Is there one or more coveted trophies, you really want to add to your wish list?

Yes, it is true that in the course of my already long career I have been able to celebrate victories in important tournaments with many great teams. But believe it or not, the title in Gstaad came first on my wish list. And I do not say this out of courtesy or because we have won here in Gstaad. I am really happy to win this amazing tournament.

You are a world traveler in polo and have been at the forefront of international polo players for two decades. For the descendant of the two great Argentine polo dynasties, Pieres or Heguy, polo sport is in their blood, so to speak. How did you come to the polo and how did you manage to become such a great player? Was there a key experience and did you have mentors who promoted your talent? I started playing polo on my dad's farm when I was a kid. Our farm was close to my uncle Daniel Gonzalez' farm. My uncle was a 10-goaler, one of the absolute top-players of his time. For example, Daniel won the Argentine Open seven times (between 1961 - 1973).

For nearly three decades he played in California and also worked as a coach there. During this time, Daniel has won many titles at all major high-goal tournaments in California. So, my uncle was one of the best liked and most popular players at the US West Coast.

Daniel was my most important mentor and a great player in every way that I wanted to emulate. Daniel took me to the Argentine polo selection in the World Polo Championship in Santa Barbara USA 1998. This was a milestone at the beginning of my career.

You've been playing as a professional for Piero Dillier for 20 years now. Piero jokingly told me, that no woman has ever endured him as long as you. How would you describe your relationship?

The relationship with Piero is first of all coined with a lot of respect and over the years Piero became one of the most important people in my life to me. We have played a lot of tournaments together and won many titles at international tournaments, but for me Piero is much more than a patron. He is a gentleman with a great personality, a great athlete and I am very happy and grateful for the great time we spend together. And I hope that many more years will follow.





Bautista Beguerie (+4)



For almost 20 years a dream team: Piero Dillier and Lucas Labat

**You have been playing at a top level for more than two decades, how can you keep your performance constant over such a long period of time?**

I really love to play polo and it is my passion. Most important for me is that my family – my lovely wife Milagros Martinez and my kids Mora and Francisco – always are with me. And another very important person is my personal trainer Ariel Celdran. His support helped and helps me to be physically and mentally fit over all these years.

**You're 43 and playing at a great level, but I'd like to ask you how long you plan to play professionally polo and what are your plans for after your active career?**

As long as my body allows it and I'm fit, I want to play polo. When I finish my career, I want to concentrate 100% on the breeding of polo horses.

**At least you are currently part-time-breeder, aren't you? By what criteria do you choose the horses used for breeding? How many breeding horses do you have? Do you have own stallions, or do you use stallion from other farms?**

I have a stud-project together with Andy Bihrer at home in Argentina! At the moment I have 8 mares which I use for spending embryos for embryo transfer. We don't have own stallions; we use the successful stallions of La Dolfina and Ellerstina. And we are looking for even more sport-ready mares for the future.

**Is there a tournament that you particularly enjoy playing, if so, why?**

I really enjoy playing in Mallorca at Barralina Polo Club. This wonderful club is owned by Daniel Crasemann and his family.





Champagne! The guys of Team Clinique La Prairie celebrate the title win: Andres Bihrer, Bautista Beguerie, Lucas Labat, Piero Dillier and Juan Manuel Gonzales



Marcos Antinori (+3)

## Ranking

1	2	3	4
<b>Team Clinique la Prairie (+14)</b>	<b>Team Hublot (+14)</b>	<b>Team Banque Eric Sturdza (+13)</b>	<b>Team Palace Gstaad (+14)</b>
Piero Dillier (SUI) 0	Marco Elser (USA) 0	Cédric Schwari (SUI) 0	Gerardo Cosentino (LIE) 0
Andres Bihrer (SUI) 0	Marcos Antinori (ITA/ARG) +3	Bautista Riglos (ARG) +3	Ismael Iraizoz (ARG) +3
Bautista Beguerie (ARG) +4	Nicolas Antinori (ITA/ARG) +4	Marcelo Pascual (ARG) +5	Santiago Schweizer (ARG) +5
Juan Manuel Gonzales (ARG) +4	Julio Novillo Astrada (ARG) +7	Joao Novaes (BRA) +5	Franco Gai (ARG) +6
Lucas Labat (ARG) +6			





Best amateur player  
Marco Elser (0)

Match for the 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Joao Novaes (+5) Team Banque Eric Sturdza and Santiago Schweizer (+5) Team Palace Gstaad

**Titleholder saved the third place**

In the match for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, Banque Eric Sturdza made good on their promise to try for the best result despite being dethroned of their title by Clinique La Prairie. In a much tighter game, they beat Gstaad Palace. The highlight was when the extraordinary 'golaso' Brazilian Joao Novaes registered a goal with a shot longer than 153 yards (beyond the middle of the field) and from the left side – an exceptional feat in polo! It was a rare moment, that for most was never before seen, even in Argentina!

**Awards**

**Best amateur player**  
Marco Elser

**Best scorer of the tournament**  
Juan Manuel Gonzales (10 goals)

**Best Playing Pony**  
'Ceron' played by Julio Novillo Astrada

Photos: © Pascal Renaudon / Kathrin Gralla



Jean-Claude Biver and Marco Elser, captain Team Hublot

**What kind of a profession would Lucas Labat have taken up if he had not become a professional polo player?**

If I had not become a polo professional, my dream job would have been a doctor.

**Do you have a life motto?**

Enjoy every moment of your present life.

**What does Lucas Labat say about himself?**

I am a lucky man and thankful for my great family. I have a wonderful wife, Milagros Martinez and two fantastic kids, Mora and Francisco.

**What are your wishes for your private and sporting future?**

My biggest wish is to continue playing polo in good health and enjoy my life together with my family and friends.

**What is your favourite pastime when you are not on the polo field? Do you have a specific hobby?**

Oh yes, I have. I love to fish in the north of Argentina in the Parana River. Fishing is very relaxing. It requires calmness and patience. A completely different experience than the fast and combative polo game.