



It may not have been the most beautiful match of Hublot Polo Gold Cup 2024, but when the final is on the line the only appealing result is a win. During this final, polo was a sport of strategy, combat, and patience: and Britain's Max Charlton proved to be the strongest at this game. All the talent of Raul Laplacette could do nothing about it, despite being named best player of the match.

BY PASCAL RENAULDON / R&B PRESSE
PHOTOGRAPHY PASCAL RENAULDON / R&B PRESSE,
KATHRIN GRALLA

HUBLOT

POLO GOLD CUP GSTAAD 2024







RANKING

1. Kielder Agro Group

Philipp Mueller 0,
Jaime Robert 3 (1 goal)
Nacho Gonzales 4(1 goal)
Max Charlton 6 (4 goals)

2. Gstaad Palace

Fabio Meier 1 (1 goal)
Luca Meier 1
Adrian Laplacette 6 (1 goal)
Raul Laplacette 6 (3 goals)

3. J. Safra Sarasin

Françoise Okala 0
Bautista Fanelli 3 (2 goals)
Horacio Fernandez Llorente 6 (4 goals)
Tete Fanelli 5 (2 goals)

4. Hublot

Jurgen Schröder 0 (1 goal)
Juan Correa 3 (3 goals)
Pedro Fernandez Llorente 5 (1 goal)
Manuel Fernandez Llorente 6 (1 goal)

Tournament top scorer: Max Charlton (Kielder Agro Group) with 17 goals

Best professional player of the final: Raul Laplacette (Gstaad Palace)

Best amateur player: Luca Meier (Gstaad Palace)

Best horse of the final: Germania, a 9-year-old bay mare bred in Argentina by Colo Germano, owned by Fabio Meier and played by Raul Laplacette

It was a defensive final which, naturally, concluded with a low score of 6-5. It was unbearable suspense until the end, with each team returning goals blow for blow. With only two minutes left on the clock, a remarkable individual play by Raul Laplacette leveled the score once again, and with mere seconds to go, Max Charlton took advantage of another 60-yard penalty. It was the goal that ultimately determined the match.

“Yes, it was a tough fight played out on penalties,” the Briton admitted. “We won today because we were a little bit luckier than Gstaad Palace since both teams were on equal footing. But I’m particularly pleased to have won here, for Phillip [Müller, his captain]. It’s amazing!”

J. Safra Sarasin landed on the third step of the podium.

Today’s opening match, the final for third place, was clinched by French captain François Okala’s team, donning the distinctive J.Safra Sarasin colors, after an action-packed second chukker. Argentinian handicap 6 Horacio Fernandez Llorente led the charge, capturing four goals. The “blues” dominated the match from start to finish, after measuring up the pitch they only discovered last Thursday.

“Actually...not quite,” Tete Fanelli was keen to point out. “This is the third time I’ve played here. I’ve been a finalist twice before but lost on both occasions. I thought this

would be my year, so I’m not completely satisfied with third place. That doesn’t stop me from enjoying this tournament enormously—the organization, the environment, the atmosphere. So I’m looking forward to coming back here and leaving with the watch!”

So, maybe this year from August 21-24. The date has already been set for this one-of-a-kind tournament, whose teams continuously express their satisfaction before they return home. This edition was no exception, an extraordinary celebration of polo that couldn’t possibly be spoiled by a little cold on Sunday.

INTERVIEW WITH PIERRE GENECAND

TWO EQUESTRIAN SPORTS AND ONE PASSION: ORGANIZATION.



After reviving the Concours Hippique International de Genève and making it the most popular indoor event on the international circuit, Geneva-born Pierre Genecand took over the organization of the Hublot Polo Gold Cup in Gstaad 20 years ago and turned it into a jewel. The former boss of Gesrep, Switzerland's oldest insurance brokerage firm, now divides his time between Uruguay, where he lives, Argentina, where his polo farm is located, and Switzerland, between Gstaad and Geneva. An inveterate hard worker, he can be summed up in three words: rigor, humor, and loyalty.

WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY WITH HORSES, AND HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THEM? DID YOU GROW UP IN A RIDING FAMILY? No one in my family was a rider. I started riding at the age of 9 and competed modestly at the national level in show-jumping competitions for 40 years. But there's no need to dwell on my career as a showjumper.

THERE WAS A TIME, NOT SO LONG AGO, WHEN YOU APPEARED IN VIRTUALLY EVERY CSI: WHY THIS PASSION FOR THIS DISCIPLINE? I chaired the CHI in Geneva for 18 years and was a member of the World Cup

committee. My travels enabled me to bring innovative ideas to Geneva, reinforcing the importance and reputation of this event, which has become a benchmark in the world of show jumping.

YOU RELAUNCHED THE CHI DE GENÈVE IN THE 1990S: WHY AND HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

In 1987, the CHI de Genève, which was then held at Les Vernets on the site of an ice rink, lost its status as a World Cup stage because the facilities did not meet the criteria required to host such a competition. Yves G. Piaget, President at the



Rodrigo (and Nelson) Pessoa and Poroto Cambiaso: riders Pierre Genecand admires for their human qualities.



time, wanted to step down. I submitted my candidacy and introduced a new project in the vast spaces of Palexpo-Genève. I insisted that our competition should be annual rather than biennial.

THEN YOU SWITCHED TO POLO. HOW DID YOU DISCOVER THIS SPORT?

After giving up show jumping, I discovered polo on a trip to Argentina in 2000 and immediately fell in love with the sport.

YOU'VE PLAYED IN TOURNAMENTS, ONCE AT PALERMO, I THINK. WHAT IS YOUR BEST MEMORY, YOUR GREATEST SUCCESS?

I was lucky enough to play in a small tournament where the final was held in Palermo. Having qualified for that final, I was able to play on Cancha 2. As for the rest, being a pure amateur, I play at a very average level and, as we say in Switzerland, 'badly but regularly.' Nevertheless, despite my age, I still participate in practice games and small tournaments in Argentina.

YOU'VE MET SOME OF THE GREATEST SHOW-JUMPING RIDERS AND POLO PLAYERS: WHO HAS MADE THE BIGGEST IMPRESSION ON YOU, IN TERMS OF PERSONALITY, IN EACH OF THE TWO DISCIPLINES?

In show jumping, I consider the Pessoa family—father and son, Nelson and Rodrigo—to be the best riders. Beyond their talent, they possess a class and education that many jumping riders unfortunately lack, despite their equestrian excellence. In polo, I think Poroto Cambiaso has the most style and efficiency, despite his very young age. What's more, he has been fortunate to receive a strict upbringing, which makes him appreciated by everyone, especially sponsors.

YOUR LOVE OF POLO LED YOU TO ESTABLISH A POLO HORSE STUD IN ARGENTINA, THE ESTANCIA EL MIRASOL. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THIS STUD FARM? In 2001, we built a modest campo in the province of Entre Ríos, with two polo fields and a good hundred horses in the meadows. Every year, we breed between ten and fourteen foals. We breed with our own two in-house stallions. One of our best mares was called In Class, with whom I participated in several seasons of tournaments in Switzerland, France, and Argentina. Unfortunately, we never managed to breed her. Two years ago, I entrusted the management of the campo to Hector Salvo, the father of Lia, whom everyone knows. He is particularly responsible for our breeding program and runs it efficiently.

YOU NOW HAVE URUGUAYAN NATIONALITY, WHICH IS NO COINCIDENCE, SINCE ONE OF YOUR ACTIVITIES IS AGRICULTURE IN THAT COUNTRY. CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT KIELDER AGRO GROUP?

I don't have Uruguayan nationality; I have a residence permit. Kielder Agro Group is a family company active in agriculture and the production of specialty foods (olive oil and coffee) in South America, the USA, and Africa.

AND FINALLY, WHILE YOU HAVE ENTRUSTED THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHI IN GENEVA TO SOPHIE MOTTU, YOU HAVE TAKEN OVER THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HUBLOT POLO GOLD CUP IN GSTAAD. WHY THIS ENTHUSIASM FOR EVENT ORGANIZATION? Sophie Mottu-Morel was my assistant when I was President of the CHI de Genève. It was natural for her to take over, and I admire the work she does and the development of the event. Unlike many other show-jumping organizers, she has managed to retain a certain

tradition and class. The size of the track and the spirit that reigns at CHI Genève have won over riders who prefer not to participate in other events taking place on the same weekend, even if they offer better prize money. Geneva allows horses and riders to compete without being forced to jump the same obstacles in identical sandboxes every weekend, motivated solely by prize money.

I've always had a passion for organizing events, whether sporting or commercial. With my experience as the organizer of the CHI-W in Geneva for several years, taking over Gstaad Polo was an easy decision, especially as I also live in this charming village in German-speaking Switzerland.

I have been organizing Gstaad for 20 years now, and we've had HUBLOT as our main sponsor for 18 years. All our other very loyal partners have also become friends. We start this event from scratch each year, as we play in the middle of the runway at Gstaad airport. We need to build the VIP tents (1,350 VIP meals served in 2024), the stables (120 boxes), the exhibitors' village, and the Kinder Paradies (children's paradise/play area). The goal is to organize an event at a level that our sponsors deserve.

WHAT DOES THE 2025 EDITION OF THIS MAJOR TOURNAMENT IN SWITZERLAND AND EUROPE HAVE IN STORE FOR US?

We already know the four team managers for the 2025 edition, which will take place from August 21 to 24. They are Switzerland's Fabio Meier and Markus Graff, Germany's Juergen Schroeder, a finalist in 2023, and Argentina's Juan Pepa, who won the Silver and Gold Cups in Deauville and the French Open in Chantilly in 2017. All in all, it promises to be a highly competitive event. •