

IFHA QUARTERLY

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IN THIS ISSUE

**IFHA PROFILE:
FRANCE GALOP'S
HENRI POURET
PAGE 2**

**JAMES MCDONALD:
2024 LONGINES
WORLD'S BEST JOCKEY
PAGE 6**

**Q&A:
JAMES MCDONALD ON
THE YEAR THAT WAS
PAGE 8**

Longines World Racing Awards to be held at the Savoy in London

The 2024 Longines World Racing Awards will be held on 21 January 2025 in London, England. The event, which is organised by the Swiss watch brand Longines and the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), will take place at the famed Savoy Hotel.

The ceremony will honour the highest-rated horse in the 2024 Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings as well as the Longines World's Best Horse Race.

The Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings are established by international handicappers according to the performance of the horses in top races. The highest rated race is determined by averaging the rankings of the first four placed horses.

Henri Pouret, the IFHA's newest Vice-Chair

by Amanda Duckworth

In October, it was announced that the Executive Council of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) had elected France Galop's Henri Pouret as Vice-Chair, representing Europe. He is filling a vacancy created by Brian Kavanagh, who had stepped down from the IFHA after a long and distinguished period of office.

While Pouret is new to the Vice-Chair role, he has had an interest in international racing since childhood and has been a valued part of the IFHA for years.

"I started working for France Galop back in 2003, having been recruited by (then Directeur Général) Louis Romanet, Chairman Emeritus of IFHA," said Pouret. "Since then, I have felt that Louis did everything he could to teach me the various aspects of international racing and nominated me very quickly to the IFHA Technical Advisory Committee. Dominique de Wenden, IFHA's former Secretary General, was also of great help on a daily basis.

"Above all, this Vice-Chair position represents continuity for me in a context where many organisations face the challenge of renewing their administrators. On a personal note, I am honoured and very thankful to the Executive Council for placing its trust and confidence in me to fulfil the role of Vice-Chair. I am eager to support the IFHA's efforts to further strengthen global collaboration on key issues impacting racing and breeding."

Pouret has previously served in multiple positions within the IFHA. He was a member and



Henri Pouret became an IFHA Vice-Chair this October

then co-chairman of the IFHA Technical Advisory Committee; a founding member of the IFHA International Harmonisation of Raceday Rules Committee; and Vice-Chairman of the IFHA International Grading and Race Planning Advisory Committee.

A lawyer by trade, he developed a love of both horses and horse racing from an early age. Pouret's grandfather owned racehorses (mostly jumpers), while his father rode as an amateur rider and trained horses as an amateur license holder. Additionally, his uncle was one of the first veterinarians to specialise in horses, and horse racing in particular, in France.

"I was lucky enough to live in the middle of horses in the countryside in the southwest of France near one of the most picturesque racecourses, Pompadour, and I was able to ride as much as possible," said Pouret. "I studied law. I really enjoy this field, and I felt that I could manage a legal career while training racehorses with an amateur license. Obviously, since I joined France Galop, it is no longer possible!"

Continued on page 3

Henri Pouret, cont.

The holder of a LLM in Public Law – Panthéon University – Assas (Paris II), Pouret joined France Galop in 2003 as the Deputy Head of the Steward's and Racing Code department and has served in a number of roles since.

In September 2005, he was appointed Head of the Steward's and Racing Code department, and in March 2009 he became the Director of the Racing Regulatory Department. In 2013, Pouret was named Deputy General Manager of France Galop, and he was promoted to Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Chief Operating Officer in January 2024.

“French racing has many strengths,” he said. “The main opportunities for French racing are its well-centralised and coordinated organisation, the level of prize money, and all the premium schemes granted to breeders and owners of French-bred horses. For instance, in flat races for 2- and 3-year-olds, 80% of the advertised price money is added to the owners of French-bred horses.

“However, our main challenge is for France Galop to be more customer-centric in order to increase attendance at the racecourses, especially among younger people, and to attract new owners and breeders. The goal is to increase the number of horses in training and the number of runners to drive the betting. This aspect is the core of our strategic plan, which was developed in 2024 and will be implemented between 2025 and 2030.”

In addition to his appointment as Vice-Chair of the IFHA, Pouret was also recently named as the next chairman of the European and Mediterranean Horseracing Federation (EMHF).

“I would like to thank again my fellow members of the EMHF Executive Council for their support and their trust for having elected me to this role,” he said. “I would like also to praise the tremendous work done by Brian Kavanagh who chaired the EMHF since its inception, and the invaluable contribution of Dr. Paull Khan, who will continue to serve as secretary general.”

Continued on page 4



As a Vice-Chair of the IFHA, Pouret presented a prize to the stable assistant responsible for Without A Fight, the Best Turned Out Horse competing in the 2024 Longines Hong Kong Vase

Henri Pouret, cont.

Pouret will begin his duties as chairman of the EMHF on 1 June 2025. He has served as member of the Executive Committee of the organisation and is well-versed in both the opportunities and challenges in the region.

“One of the main opportunities of European and Mediterranean racing is the open cross competition with horses coming almost every day from different jurisdictions,” he said. “There is also all the positive diversity of horse racing located in the same region: all kinds of races, all kinds of breeds, and all kinds of racing nations sharing the same values added to a close relationship with our sister trotting organisation, the UET.

“As far as the challenges are concerned, some are in common with other jurisdictions: attracting a new audience; better knowledge of our sport, notably among politicians; welfare/social licensing; and fair return to the sport based on good governance and fair betting contribution.”

The past year has shown that Pouret’s reputation on the global scene undoubtedly continues to grow, and he remains thankful for the exposure he had as a child to the greatness of international competition.

“This goes back to when I was a kid—my father read a review called ‘Courses & Elevages,’ which was about racing and breeding,” he said. “There was a section about international racing, and I found it fascinating, especially when champions – both horses and jockeys – came racing in France.”

Having dedicated his professional career to the improvement of French racing, it should come as little surprise that many of Pouret’s personal favourites also highlight some of the greatest moments in racing from there.

“My favourite racehorse is Zarkava,” he said. “Her performance in the Prix Vermeille was absolutely amazing—failing to break at the start and quickening up in the home straight in such a fashion. My favourite race is obviously the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe because this is the peak of international competition in front of all the international experts. My favourite track is Longchamp, and I encourage every racing fan to walk the course to gain a better understanding of its uniqueness.”

Given his background, it also follows that Pouret counts his family among those who have had the most influence on his career, along with a name near and dear to many in the international racing world.

“My father first, who had the brilliant idea, when I was a kid, to sit me on the back of one of his broodmares, Cannelle II, before I was even able to walk,” Pouret said. “My mother for accepting that almost all the discussions at home were about horse racing. And Louis Romanet for choosing me and teaching me his racing administrator knowledge. I am truly passionate about horse racing, and I will do everything I can to serve this wonderful sport for as long as I can.”



Unbeaten Zarkava gets the nod as Pouret’s favourite racehorse



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James McDonald crowned 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey

After a tremendous year, James McDonald claimed the Longines World's Best Jockey Award for the second time. The New Zealand-born, Australia-based jockey was recognised for his accomplishments during the Longines Hong Kong International Races Gala Dinner on 6 December 2024.

A rising star on the international scene, McDonald first took the title in 2022. He accumulated 160 points throughout the 2024 competition, and in doing so, he narrowly defeated Ryan Moore, who has won this award

four times. Moore was second with 150 points, while William Buick was third with 105 points.

McDonald won nine of the world's Top 100 Group or Grade 1 races, with his qualifying victories coming in the Longines Hong Kong Cup (Romantic Warrior), Stewards' Cup (Voyage Bubble), Citi Hong Kong Gold Cup (Romantic Warrior), Ranvet Stakes (Via Sistina), FWD Queen Elizabeth II Cup (Romantic Warrior), Yasuda Kinen (Romantic Warrior), Ladbrokes Cox Plate (Via Sistina), Darley Champions Sprint (Sunshine in Paris), and TAB Champions Stakes (Via Sistina).

"I am very proud and very humbled to be in the position I am in," said McDonald. "Obviously, it is a great indication of the world class horses I was able to partner throughout the Top 100 races in the world. To be able to win nine of them, including on arguably my two favourite horses at this time, was pretty special."

Continued on page 7



James McDonald was honoured earlier this month as the 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey by Longines and the IFHA

World's Best Jockey cont.

The Gala Dinner, held at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, served as the perfect occasion for honouring McDonald as the 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey.

In recognition, McDonald was presented with an elegant Longines timepiece from Longines CEO Matthias Breschan and the iconic crystal vase by Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges, Chair of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA).

The awarding of the Longines World's Best Jockey title is based upon performances in the 100 highest-rated Group 1 and Grade 1 races as established for the year by the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings Committee. The scoring incorporates races from December 1st of the previous year until November 30th of the current

LONGINES World's Best Jockey Leading Jockeys *** as of 24th November 2024	
Jockey	Total Points
James McDonald	160
Ryan L. Moore	150
William T. Buick	105
Craig A. Williams	80
Flavien Prat	76

year. Jockeys accrue 12 points for a win, 6 points for placing second, and 4 points for placing third.

The Longines World's Best Jockey Award was established in 2014 by Swiss watch brand Longines and the IFHA to recognise a jockey as the best among his or her global peers. It marked the first time a rider was honoured in such a way. Previous winners include Hugh Bowman, Frankie Dettori, and Ryan Moore.

“When you look at Frankie winning four and Ryan winning four, it’s such a hard award to win,” said McDonald. “It’s such a long season and you have to be so consistent and be able to be part of a big horse’s journey. At the moment I’m blessed because I’ve got two (Romantic Warrior and Via Sistina).

The full and final standings for the 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey competition can be found at www.ifhaonline.org.



McDonald has won the Longines World's Best Jockey title twice

James McDonald, the 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey, on the year that was

James McDonald is one of the rising stars on the international racing scene. In 2022, he won his first Longines World's Best Jockey Award, and this year he won the title for the second time. McDonald won the 2024 award by a narrow margin of 10 points. The scoring process rewards jockeys for finishing in the top three, giving McDonald a total of 160 points on the year. Ryan Moore, who has won this award four times, was second with 150 points.

McDonald recently sat down to discuss his continued success as well as the horses who he partnered with this season to win nine of the Top 100 Group/Grade 1 races in the world. A few days later, he would go on to win two of the 2024 Hong Kong International Races thanks to Romantic Warrior and Voyage Bubble.



James McDonald accepted the Longines World's Best Jockey trophy from IFHA Chair Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges

Q: This was the second time you have been honoured among your peers in Hong Kong for winning the Longines World's Best Jockey competition. How does that feel?

A: I am very proud and humbled to be in the position I am in. Obviously, it is a great indication of the world class horses I was able to partner throughout the top 100 races in the world. To be able to win nine of them, including on arguably my two favourite horses at this time, was pretty special. Amongst those nine, there were some brilliant races. I am very proud and very humbled to win it.

I did watch the Japan Cup (the final race of the competition) with great intent. Obviously, Ryan has had a wonderful season as well. I think with the amount of points we both accumulated, either of us would have won in almost every other year. It's been a wonderful year for both of us.

Q: Of your qualifying victories, the majority of them have come through your partnerships with Romantic Warrior and Via Sistina. Can you tell us more about each of them and what makes them so special?

A: You could say that they are a little bit different. 'Romantic,' Mark McNamara sums him up perfectly. He's the perfect racehorse. If you could build a racehorse, it would be Romantic Warrior. 'Via' is a little bit different. She's a little bigger and ganglier and probably needs things to go to plan in terms of racing style.

One thing they both have in common is great sustained speed. Weight for age horses have got that in spades. Romantic Warrior has obviously got tactical speed, sustained speed, a

Continued on page 9

James McDonald, cont.

turn of foot. He's got it all. Hence, why he is arguably the best horse on turf in the world. Romantic is the perfect racehorse.

Q: You also won qualifying races with Voyage Bubble and Sunshine in Paris. Can you tell us about them as well?

A: Voyage Bubble has done a terrific job in Hong Kong, and he is well-traveled as well. He's been a wonderful horse over the mile trip here. He ran second in the International races behind Golden Sixty (in December 2023) and then came out and won the Group 1 mile a month later. It's another testament of how tough the good Hong Kong horses are, and he's been a great racehorse for his connections.

Sunshine in Paris is a beauty. I haven't had anything to do with her except for that one particular day. It was my first ever sit on her. It was obviously a good ride to pick her up on. She was running terrific races all season without any luck. She needs things to go her way, and she was able to just be held up a little bit and come with one dash. Her preparation was brilliant. She was definitely on an upward spiral and she was peaking for that particular day. You do as much homework as you possibly can of what you think suits the horse and you try to execute that to the best of your ability. We knew going out there that if we could be a length closer, she was obviously

BONUS CONTENT:

To watch the celebration video of James McDonald, the 2024 Longines World's Best Jockey, please visit the [IFHA's YouTube page](#).



©Japan Racing Association
McDonald rode Romantic Warrior to victory in the Yasuda Kinen (G1) in Japan

going to be right in the money because she was only being beaten short margins her three starts prior. The game plan was to be a lot closer, and we executed it pretty well.

Q: What have some of your favourite rides been this past year?

A: The Yasuda Kinen, the Japanese race on Romantic, is right up there. That was a huge thrill. Any race on him is pretty good.

But I would say the Cox Plate with Via. Obviously being from Australia, the Cox Plate is arguably our greatest race on turf, and it takes a champion to win it. It assembles a great field normally, and to win it on Via was a great thrill. The way she did it as well was spectacular.

If I could name two, it is the Japanese race with Romantic, and the Cox Plate with Via.

Continued on page 10

James McDonald, cont.

Q: You and Ryan Moore were neck and neck for this year's title. Winning the Champions Sprint and Champions Stakes on the same day gave you the nod. What was that day like?

A: It wasn't so much about the points or anything, it was more about the Flemington carnival. We had such a great week the first three days, and we really wanted to, so to speak, put the nail in the coffin. We were able to do it with two Group 1s and another win on the day. They were special wins. Both horses deserved it because they've been racing so consistently, and the whole Cup week was so consistent as well. It was really the icing on the cake for sure.

Q: What skills help a jockey both with different race distances and different equine temperaments?

A: It's basically horsemanship and doing your homework. Knowing what the capabilities of your horse are and what it can do is a great asset. Horsemanship and knowing what capabilities your horse has are key.



Via Sestina is one of the leading horses McDonald partnered with in 2024

Q: In general, how do you feel about the value of international competition?

A: It's huge. I think the world is getting stronger. We see horses come from all over the world and make racing better for it. To be the best, you have to beat the best. That's what racing's become. It's such a small world and easy to get around. We've seen it with Romantic Warrior traveling to three different countries, and obviously he has other big targets in store.

I also love how the Breeders' Cup showcases great Europeans when they meet the Americans. Royal Ascot is the same. We've got the Melbourne Cup Carnival. Then you have Hong Kong. It's brilliant to see all the best horses clash.

Engelbrecht-Bresges elected VP of IHSC

Ingmar De Vos, President of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), was unanimously elected as the International Horse Sports Confederation (IHSC) President, and Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges, Chair of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), was elected as the IHSC Vice-President at the IHSC General Assembly in Hong Kong on 6 December 2024. The IHSC was established in 2013, when the FEI and the IFHA joined forces to create the first formal vehicle for cooperation between the world's leading bodies for equestrian sport.

"I am very pleased with Ingmar's election as the new IHSC President and I strongly believe that the Confederation will benefit greatly from his capable leadership," said Engelbrecht-Bresges.

Elegance is an attitude



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CONQUEST

LONGINES WORLD RANKINGS

As he has for most of the year, Laurel River maintains the top position in the latest edition of the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings for 2024.

Laurel River, who is currently rated at 128, earned his rating following his easy victory in the Dubai World Cup sponsored by Emirates Airline (G1) at Meydan.

Two horses currently share second position in the rankings with a rating of 127. City of Troy earned his rating in the Juddmonte International Stakes (G1) at York. He set a course record in August during that contest.

LONGINES
World's Best Racehorse Rankings
Leading Horses

for 3yos and upwards which raced between
1st January 2024 - 10th November 2024

Rank	Horse	Rating	Trained
1	Laurel River (USA)	128	UAE
2	City of Troy (USA)	127	IRE
2	Via Sistina (IRE)	127	AUS
4	Calandagan (IRE)	125	FR
4	Goliath (GER)	125	FR
4	Sierra Leone (USA)	125	USA



Laurel River has been the highest rated horse in the world for most of 2024

He is joined on a rating of 127 by Via Sistina. She earned her rating when she won the Ladbrokes Cox Plate (G1) in course-record time this October at Moonee Valley.

The full list and further information on the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings are available on the IFHA website.

The next edition of the rankings is the year-end 2024 Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings, which will be released on 21 January 2025.