



PRESS RELEASE

## **ALL EYES ON THE ROLEX US EQUESTRIAN OPEN GRAND PRIX AS FORTY OF THE WORLD'S LEADING ATHLETES WILL COMPETE FOR THE 2026-TITLE AT THE WINTER EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL - ROLEX FINALE WEEK**

**Geneva, 27 March 2026** – The anticipation is building for Saturday night's Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix at the Winter Equestrian Festival - Rolex Finale Week held at Wellington International in Wellington, Florida, USA. The \$1,000,000 CSI5\* 1.60m Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix marks the start of the Rolex Series 2026, and takes place on Saturday, March 28, at 8.00 PM local time – under the floodlights of Wellington International's magnificent main arena.

The Rolex Series unites seven of the world's most esteemed show jumping events, and the highlight of each of them is the Rolex Grand Prix. At the Winter Equestrian Festival - Rolex Finale Week, forty athletes have qualified for the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix; the thirty best from Thursday's CSI5\* 1.55m Table A over two rounds, and the ten best from Friday's CSI5\* 1.50m Table A over one round against the clock.

A total of 60 horse-and-rider combinations lined up for Thursday's qualifier, where round two was open to the twelve best from round one. A world-class field of athletes had entered this competition, hoping to secure qualification for the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix.

One of those was Shane Sweetnam (IRL), who had a clear strategy ahead of the first qualifier for his 10-year-old gelding Coriaan van Klapscheut Z (Comme Il Faut 5 x Lord Z).

“There were two plans for him,” Sweetnam said of Coriaan van Klapscheut Z’s program for the Rolex Finale Week. “One, to qualify. Two, to win the class. That’s the way I looked at it. Coriaan is in a great place, and I felt he definitely could go clear and obviously have a chance to win. I thought that was a better gamble and also keeps James Kann Cruz fresh for Saturday night.”

Sweetnam’s planning paid off. As third to go in the second round, the 45-year-old – a stalwart on the Irish team who has won team gold and team silver at the European Championships in 2017 and 2023 – produced the first clear round over Guilherme Jorge’s shortened track with a lightning-fast time of 39.71 seconds. None of the remaining four riders could catch Sweetnam; poles fell for all apart from last-to-go Richard Vogel (GER) – pre-qualified for the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix as reigning European Champion – who slotted into second with Cludio (Casall x San Patrignano Cassini) with a time of 40.53 seconds. A rail down in 39.55 seconds left Daniel Bluman (ISR) and Hummer Z (Harley VDL x Hemmingway) in third.

“Obviously this is a pressure class, because it is a qualifier for Saturday night,” Sweetnam commented after his win. “I think [it is] the best field that has been at the Winter Equestrian Festival so far, and obviously a top class, big enough, and a ticket to win [the Grand Prix] is really important.”

“It has a real big Grand Prix feel about it, not just for America but really for the world,” Sweetnam (45) said looking ahead to the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix where he will be riding his Olympic mount James Kann Cruz (Kannan x Cruising).

For complete results from the CSI5\* 1.55m, [click here](#).

In Friday’s CSI5\* 1.50m Table A over one round against the clock, which served as the second Grand Prix qualifier, Charlotte Jacobs (USA) and the 13-year-old gelding Rincoola Milsean (Aldatus Z x Cruising) took a home win. With a time of 66.88 seconds, Jacobs was slightly ahead of her compatriot Marilyn Little (USA) and Narado (Grandorado TN N.O.P. x Purioso) who placed second, just 0.64 behind the winner. Jordan Coyle (IRL) and Ariso (Casall x Contender) slotted into third.

“I feel amazing,” Jacobs (31) said afterwards. “I knew this class was important for tomorrow. I also knew I had a good chance to win with him, so I stuck to my plan and really rode my numbers. I’m thrilled with the outcome.”

For complete results from the CSI5\* 1.50m, [click here](#).

Other notable names qualified for the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix include title defender and reigning Olympic Champion Christian Kukuk (GER), world no. 2 Kent Farrington (USA), world no. 3 Ben Maher (GBR), world no. 7 Nina Mallevaey (FRA), world no. 11 Laura Kraut (USA), as well as rising stars such as Mimi Gochman (USA) and Tom Wachman (IRL) who are both among the top five on the FEI U25 Jumping Ranking.

For full reports from the qualifiers, [click here](#).

## **Key facts of the Rolex US Equestrian Open Grand Prix**

Number of starters: 40

Grand Prix qualifiers:

- CSI5\* 1.55m Table A over two rounds on Thursday, 26 March – top 30 qualify for the Rolex Grand Prix
- CSI5\* 1.50m Table A over one round against the clock on Friday, 27 March – top 10 qualify for the Rolex Grand Prix

Course height: 1.60m

Course designer: Guilherme Jorge

Prize money: 1 million USD

## **WINNERS OF THE ROLEX US EQUESTRIAN OPEN GRAND PRIX**

2015 McLain Ward – HH Carlos Z (USA)

2016 Ben Maher – Saren (GBR)

2017 Sergio Alvarez Moya – Charmeur (ESP)

2018 Margie Engle – Royce (USA)

2019 McLain Ward – HH Azur (USA)

2021 Daniel Deusser – Killer Queen (GER)

2022 Ashlee Bond – Karoline of Ballmore (USA)

2023 Richard Vogel – Cepano Baloubet (GER)

2024 Christian Kukuk – Checker 47 (GER)

2025 Christian Kukuk – Checker 47 (GER)

## **About the Rolex Series**

The Rolex Series brings together seven of the world's most respected show jumping events, each of them supported by Rolex. The highlight of each of these events is the Rolex Grand Prix, where the best

horses and riders in the world compete for seven of the most coveted Grand Prix-titles in the sport of show jumping.

United through the Rolex Series, which was launched in 2024, these seven esteemed events all have their own distinctive qualities but also share certain common denominators. Firstly, each of the events that are part of the Rolex Series honours the heritage and traditions that so uniquely characterize the sport of show jumping. Furthermore, the venues that make up the series – many of them with a rich equestrian history – offer facilities and infrastructure which are globally renowned. The seven venues are also all especially valued for their highly enthusiastic and knowledgeable spectators who create an unparalleled atmosphere known to make horses and riders perform at their absolute best.

## **Rolex Series Events 2026**

Winter Equestrian Festival - Rolex Finale Week | March 24-29, 2026

CSIO Roma Piazza di Siena | May 27-31, 2026

Jumping International de La Baule - Officiel de France | June 11-14, 2026

Falsterbo Horse Show | July 8-12, 2026

Jumping International de Dinard | July 30-August 2, 2026

RDS Dublin Horse Show | August 5-9, 2026

Brussels Stephex Masters | August 26-30, 2026

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