

Endurance Longines FEI World Endurance Championships 2016

The Swiss watchmaker Longines was the Title Partner, the Official Timekeeper and the Official Watch of the Longines FEI World Endurance Championships held last September in the Samorin Equestrian Centre, Slovakia.

Endurance Riding is a competition against the forces of time and nature. Originally created to test the strongest horses to breed for stamina and speed, Endurance is also a test of the athlete's ability to safely manage their mount over any terrain and weather. Championship rides are over 120-160 kilometers and take up to 6 hours of time in the saddle depending on climate and terrain. Horses must be at least 8 years old to qualify for Championship competitions and their condition is strictly monitored and vetted during competition day. The goal is to win on a sound horse in the time allotted. The Best Condition award, which is a voluntary judging on the first 10 horses to finish, will give the award to the horse with a "fit to continue" status.

SPANISH TEAM IS GOLD AT SAMORIN — On 17 September 2016, Spain's Jaume Puntí Dachs riding Twyst Maison Blanche captured individual gold and led the Spanish team to gold at the Longines FEI World Endurance Championships 2016, in Samorin, Slovakia. Puntí Dachs 10-year-old grey gelding crossed the finish line in the time of 06:46:42 with teammate Alex Luque Moral riding Calandria finishing not a minute behind for Silver and later the deserved Best Condition award. Bahrain took Bronze as HH Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa finished two minutes later on Waterlea Dawn Treader. The team podium was 100% European with Spain first, finishing their three team riders first, second and sixth place; France second and Netherlands third. The ride track which circled from the X-Bionic Equestrian center, started the loops with park trails running alongside the river Danube then traveled through vineyards, farmland, and fields and what was not technical nor over complicated terrain.

RIDE DAY — Spain's team had not lead the ride during the day but were placed within the top ten in the last loop of 20kms and were assured a place on the podium. Although not first over the finish line, a clear vet score put Twyst Maison Blanche and Puntí Dachs in the gold and the Team on the podium for Spain. Puntí Dachs said before the competition the Spanish team had made a ride plan. "Unfortunately, on the second loop we lost Maria, my wife, as her horse had some foot issues. We thought in the third loop the speed was a bit too fast so we slowed down. In the fourth loop we came together again, and

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the fifth loop we were not first on the line, but these things happen and that is like life." Bahrain's Bronze medalist HH Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa summarized his feelings after the race. "The race was very difficult, especially the third loop because of humidity. I believed in my plan and it worked. To prepare for these Championships, I trained in Bahrain and France and my horse was not tired at all, he was perfect."





A SPANISH RIDING FORCE — It was Spain's Jaume Puntí Dachs riding Ajayeb, who took individual honors and led the Spanish to team Gold at the FEI European Endurance Championships 2015 in Samorin. The Spanish team, which included 2010 World Champion, María Alvarez Ponton riding Selif de la Nie, finished almost an hour before France's Team Silver, and 100% of Spain's riders finished in the top 10. Married to Puntí Dachs with three children together, María Alvarez has won every World Championships on her gelding, Nobby, beginning with the 2008 Terengganu, Malaysia, World Endurance Championships. In 2009 María Alvarez and Nobby won the European Championship in Assisi, Italy, then in 2010 the duo took Gold at the World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky, USA, followed by the 2011 European Championship in Florac, France, in 2011. Coming up in the hoofprints of the Senior Team, the Spanish Young riders recently made their mentors proud, taking the Gold Individual and Gold Team awards at the FEI 120 km European Endurance Championship for Young Riders and Juniors in Portugal. That event on 3 September was held at the Rio Frio Equestrian center outside of Lisbon.

VENUE — A total of 134 horse/rider combinations from 46 nations turned out for the 6am mass start at Slovakia's state-of-the-art Samorin Equestrian Centre, brain-child of Slovakian businessman Mario Hoffmann. The Samorin Equestrian complex, 80 kms from Vienna and 25 kms from the Slovakian Capital of Bratislava is a multi-sport facility covering over 100 hectares. In 2014, the FEI World Endurance Championships for Young Horses 2014 was held at the Samorin venue with one of the highest completion rates recorded for a seven-year-old horse Endurance competition in any country. From a total of 44 combinations, 20 successfully finished with the UAE's Mansour Saeed Mohd Al Faresi securing Gold on Tiswan Fageole. In 2015 the FEI European Endurance Championships were also held in Samorin, and the trails and venue were given a top report. The 160 km track was over grass, field, and forest track run in five phases of 40, 35, 35, 30, 20 kms, returning to the Inspection Vet Gate after each loop. Part of the scenic track will be along the Danube River, skirting around Bratislava at the foot of the Little Carpathian Mountains.



VET GATE — The Vet Gate keeps strict control of the health of the horses. In a 160 km ride, there are mandatory vet checks to ensure the continued good condition of the competition horses, and required rest stops at each hold. At the end of each phase, there is a compulsory halt for Veterinary inspection. Each phase of an Endurance Competition must be separated by a compulsory rest period, or hold time. In this Championship event there were hold times of 180 minutes. The combination that finishes the course in the shortest time after all final Veterinary Inspections shall be deemed the winner.

BACKGROUND — The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), the governing body of equestrian sports, recognized endurance as an official discipline in 1982. The fastest growing discipline in the FEI, there are 53 countries qualified to compete. Authenticity, durability, reliability and technical capability are all part of the most prized qualities of the rider/equestrian combination. It is a partnership sport with two hearts competing. The horse will give his utmost effort and the rider must take care of them both where he is able

to protect their health and welfare. A prized endurance horse might have a willing attitude, an athletic physique (good heart rates), a good appetite (to eat and drink during the heat of competition), and a calm demeanor keeping a heart rate down. Held every 4 years, alternating with the Olympic Games and under the authority of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI), the World Equestrian Games are the biggest equestrian event in the world. The FEI World Endurance Championships are held in every Olympic year. Longines first partnered the World Championship of this discipline in 2012 at Euston Park, UK and was the Official Timekeeper of the 2012 Longines FEI World Endurance Championships with over 153 riders from 38 nations taking part. Held across 160km of land in the beautiful grounds of the Euston Estate, the seat of the Duke and Duchess of Grafton, and several local landowners, the championships were truly a test of skill and stamina for both horses and riders. As FEI's Top Partner, Longines, Title Partner, Official Timekeeper and Watch of the Longines FEI World Endurance Championships 2016, was proud to present an elegant watch to Jaume Puntí Dachs riding Twyst Maison Blanche, winner of the 160 km race. *(Pamela Burton)*