

Racing TV – Grande Course de Haies d'Auteuil

Young El Clavel gets the better of champion Losange Bleu and establishes himself as an Auteuil giant



When, from the very first stride, the overwhelming favourite **Losange Bleu** (Martaline) took the lead in the Racing TV – Grande Course de Haies d'Auteuil, never relinquishing it until the final turn, the large crowd gathered at Auteuil on Saturday was convinced they were witnessing the Papot family's champion complete a tenth victory in the Group 1 event that crowns the best spring hurdler... Indeed, Johnny Charron's partner set a strong pace, wearing down his rivals one by one. All except one: the young **El Clavel** (Spanish Moon), cleverly kept in ambush behind the leader by his shrewd jockey James Reveley. As they entered the straight, Losange Bleu made a slight mistake at the second-last hurdle, which disrupted his rhythm just a little. His jockey then chose to head directly for the post to save every possible meter – while El Clavel cut diagonally across the track to reach the rail in front of the stands: a longer route, yes, but one that allows a horse to run more straight and true over the final stretch.

Once the last hurdle was cleared, the battle on the flat was both thrilling and tense, as it was difficult to tell who was in front with the two horses so far apart across the full width of the track. In the end, it was El Clavel who triumphed.

Losange Bleu finished second, a little over a length behind. **Imbatable du Seuil** (Kamsin) came in third, a fair way back (eight lengths). It is a first victory for the partnership between two young trainers, Amanda Zetterholm and Noel George!

Official Result

RACING TV – GRANDE COURSE DE HAIES D'AUTEUIL

1st EL CLAVEL (J. Reveley)

2nd LOSANGE BLEU (J. Charron)

3rd IMBATABLE DU SEUIL (K. Nabet)

Time: 6'01"95. Margins: 1 1/4 - 8 - 1 3/4.

Quotes

Noël George, co-trainer of El Clavel, 1st (Ailly-Saint-Léonard – Chantilly training center, Oise)

"El Clavel is simply a crack! I've thought so from the very start. He's tireless... as we say in the trade: he's all grit! I've lost my voice from shouting in the home straight. With him, we dreamed of the Grand Steeple-Chase de Paris because he's got the physique for it. But that's for the future. What he's doing over hurdles already is incredible. I can't even train him properly in the mornings because he goes so fast and never gets tired. I can throw three pace-setters at him, he never blows and never sweats. I asked James Reveley to tuck him in behind Losange Bleu, and that's exactly what he did – he gave him a dream ride.

Before the race, the stable manager kindly reminded me to go easy with him over hurdles, because he's destined to become a star over fences. But in the end, we won!

El Clavel is a champion. As James and I say, if we're ever going to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup, it'll be with him!"

Dominique Bressou, trainer of Losange Bleu, 2nd (Dragey, Manche)

"Making the running has always been his tactic. This time, it worked in the rival's favour. We were beaten by a horse who had a lead to follow the whole way. Maybe he's better? We have some analysis to do. We'll try to understand how he was beaten by a horse he had previously dominated."

Mickaël Seror, trainer of Imbatable du Seuil, 3rd (Chantilly, Oise)

"I'm very happy. He's a horse I've always loved, but he's a bit complicated mentally. When you're the lowest-rated horse, it's always scary to go for the big races. The French program means that long-distance races are usually top-class events. He proved he's up to the level. When he's in the mood, he's good. I wanted to target Group 1s, but I thought the owners would never agree. In the end, it was the horse who pushed me to go. He'll now have a break and we'll return to hurdles at Auteuil for the classic programme."