

Explosion W Rockets To The Top In Longines Global Champions Tour Of New York

Ben Maher wins his third five-star grand prix in a row at the debut show on Governors Island.

Photos And Story By **Mollie Bailey**



Ben Maher and Explosion W picked the right weekend to shine. The debut edition of the Longines Global Champions Tour of New York, which took place on Governors Island in Manhattan, served as not only a five-star show, but also as the series finale for the Global Champions Tour. So when Maher and his chestnut powerhouse won nearly everything in sight—including the \$328,350 Longines GCT Grand Prix of New York and the series title—they had a serious payday.

They also paired up with London Knights teammate Martin Fuchs and Clooney 51 to win the Global Champions League of New York and that series title.

Explosion W and Ben Maher won everything in their path at the Longines Global Champions Tour of New York, including the \$328,350 Longines GCT Grand Prix of New York.

“It’s just a dream. One day I’m going to wake up and realize I don’t ride a horse like this.”

—Ben Maher

\$328,350
LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR
GRAND PRIX OF NEW YORK CSI5*
 New York, N.Y.—Sept. 28

HORSE/RIDER/NATION	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. Explosion W/Ben Maher/GBR	0-0	34.08	\$108,355
2. Cornado NRW/Marcus Ehning/GER	0-0	34.65	65,670
3. The Sinner/Martin Fuchs/SUI	0-0	34.95	49,252
4. Ulane De Coquerie/Alberto Zorzi/ITA	0-0	35.11	32,835
5. Sterrehof's Dante/Marc Houtzager/NED	0-0	35.31	19,708
6. H&M Indiana/Malin Baryard-Johnsson/SWE	0-0	35.68	14,775
7. Claire Z/Pieter Devos/BEL	0-8	51.29	9,850

►Also competed: 8. Lizziemary/D. Waldman/ISR, 4; 9. Romeo 88/D. Kenny/IRL, 4; 10. Gancia De Muze/N. Bruynseels/BEL, 4; 11. Jacobien Dwerse Hagen/J. Verlooy/BEL, 4; 12. Killer Queen VDM/D. Deusser/GER, 4; 13. New York/B. Chudyba/SVK, 4; 14. Austria 2/K. Farrington/USA, 4; 15. KM Chalcedon/J. Vrieling/NED, 5; 16. Uccello De Will/S. Delestre/FRA, 8; 17. Virtuose Champeix/J. Epailard/FRA, 8; 18. RMF Zecillie/J. Springsteen/USA, 8; 19. H&M Christian K/P. Fredricson/SWE, 8; 20. Beauville Z/M. van der Vleuten/NED, 8; 21. Quintino/C. Kukuk/GER, 8; 22. Uno De La Roque/F. Mathy Jr./BEL, 8; 23. Casquell/E. Tops-Alexander/AUS, 12; 24. Verdi Treize/C. van Paesschen/BEL, 12; 25. Edesa S Banjan/G. Gulliksen/NOR, 16; 26. Coldplay 31/A. Kocher/USA, 16; 27. Monaco/H. Smolders/NED, 16; 28. Ricore Courcelle/T. Vlock/ISR, 33; VDL Groep Miss Untouchable/L. van Asten/NED, VW; Borsato/H. Charles/GBR, VW; Atome Z/T. Schumacher/FRA, VW; Hello Mr President/S. Brash/GBR, VW; Bull Run's Risen/K. VanderVeen/USA, VW; Ladriano Z/D. Bluman/ISR, VW; For Joy Van't Zorgvliet HDC/K. Staut/FRA, VW.



Great performances by Martin Fuchs (*left*) and Ben Maher pushed the London Knights to the series title in the Global Champions League.

over the reins to a series of stable riders, including Emily Mason, who piloted him to a double-clear performance to help Great Britain win in Nations Cup competition in Wellington, Florida, last season. Maher took the ride back in April last year, winning his first class out of the gate.

“He’s just a shark,” said the 36-year-old. “He comes forward so quick, and he’s always careful. He’s very sensitive and a bit quirky—he won’t let me on him unless we feed him sugar. I think he likes me; it’s just the way he is.

“He really likes the people that he knows,” he continued. “He’s a real character—just an incredible horse who’s so intelligent. Even when he’s tired and cantering around in the prizegiving he sees shadows and spooks at dirt on the floor. This is what makes him so sharp when he’s jumping.”

Maher had a phone call with London Knights teammate Fuchs before the competition, and they agreed to trot out their top talent for the two-round Global Champions League competition. After all, the Knights sat third heading into the final and faced a must-win scenario in order to have a chance at winning the whole circuit and a serious paycheck.

So Maher brought Explosion, and Fuchs rode Clooney 51. Normally the two go head-to-head, like at the European Championships, when Clooney 51, a 13-year-

Maher headed into the final leg of the LGCT neck-and-neck with Belgian Pieter Devos in the grand prix standings, with the British rider behind by just a single point. Both riders qualified for the jump-off, but Devos fell from contention when a sliced turn backfired and Claire Z dug in her heels at an in-and-out. Maher turned on the speed for his go, shaving over half a second off the best time to relegate Marcus Ehning and his one-eyed wonderhorse Cornado NRW to second in the grand prix.

That bumped Devos down to second in the series standings, with Maher taking home an extra \$322,023 as the series winner.

“Explosion won three five-star grand prix [classes] in a row,” said Maher of the 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Chacco-Blue—Untouchable, Baloubet Du Rouet). “It’s just a dream. One day I’m going to wake up and realize I don’t ride a horse like this. A horse like this comes along maybe once in a lifetime.”

Maher and Explosion W have moved from strength to strength this summer, winning a class at the Aachen CHIO (Germany) before winning the grand prix at the London LGCT. They then headed to Rotterdam, the Netherlands, for the Longines FEI European Championships, where they won individual silver, and then they won the grand prix at the Rome LGCT.

Poden Farms bought Explosion when he was 7, and Maher showed him in a few small shows before handing

By The Numbers

19
Nations represented

200
Bags of carrots

51
CSI5* riders

2,600
Bags of shavings

95
CSI5* horses

2,204
Tons of footing installed

700
Bales of hay

HORSE SHOWS

old Westphalian (Cornet Obolensky—Fraulein Vom Moor, Ferragamo) got the edge and boosted Fuchs to gold.

The two went first on Day 1 of the competition, with each laying down a zippy clear that no one else could match, and Maher marked the fastest time to win the individual portion of the class. On the second day they were last into the ring, repeating their faultless performance to win their fifth GCL competition and move to the top of the series leaderboard as well as taking home the lion's share of the \$8,201,631 series pot.

“When you're sitting on the best two horses in the world you can jump a 1.55-meter course easier than on another horse, but it's still difficult to leave all the fences up and be quick enough,” said Fuchs.

Like Fuchs, Maher gave all the credit to his mount.

“The power couple was Explosion and Clooney, not me and Martin,” said Maher. “I'm biased, but I've got an incredible horse, and Clooney is too. I was unfortunately beaten at the Euros at almost the final jump. To lose to Martin was painful, but he's a good friend. It's great to ride together. It's a unique concept bringing horses together from different countries.” 🐾

TIDBITS



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