EAM USA

to Seek Revenge in Second Duel of the

Longines Masters of New York this April

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By Emily Riden/Jump Media Photos by Sport Fort

Start by taking the excitement, prestige, and international rivalry of something like a Nations' Cup competition. Now, give it an edge. Instead of having each nation competing solely as a team against opposing countries, pit each rider directly against another in an exhilarating face-off. This describes the creation of the all-new Riders Masters Cup, which made its thrilling debut on December 2nd at the Longines Masters of Paris, the first event of Season Three of the prestigious Longines Masters Series.

In the first leg of the inaugural series, five riders from Team USA took on five riders from Team Europe over two rounds of competition. Team Europe ultimately emerged victorious on their home turf in front of an electric, predominately French crowd, but not before an exciting showdown and a promise from Team USA to come on strong for the second and final leg of the Riders Masters Cup, to be held April 28, 2018, at the inaugural Longines Masters of New York at NYCB Live.

Led by 2014 Olympic medal winning Chefs d'Equipe Robert Ridland for Team USA and Philippe Guerdat for Team Europe, the riders faced off individually against their randomly drawn rival, with match-ups as follows:



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Team USA's Chloe Reid vs. Team Europe's Maikel van der Vleuten of The Netherlands

Team USA's Laura Kraut vs. Team Europe's Grégory Wathelet of Belgium

Team USA's Reed Kessler vs. Team Europe's Jos Verlooy of Belgium

Team USA's Lauren Hough vs. Team Europe's Lorenzo de Luca of Italy



Longines Masters Paris 2017 Rider Master Cup Manach 1-Europe Kevin Straut

Longines Masters Paris 2017 Rider Master Cup Manach 1-USA Chloe Reid ET Europe Maikel Van Der Vleuten

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Lauren Hough

and Waterford

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Devin Ryan and his mount, Cooper, and Kevin Staut aboard Ayade de Septon et HD C were the first to take on the track set by 2017 Longines FEI European Championship course designer Louis Konickx of The Netherlands. An unfortunate tack malfunction forced Ryan's elimination, while a clear round in a time of 59.05 seconds from Staut further cemented the win in the first match-up for Team Europe.

Next came 21-year-old Chloe Reid aboard Sally 643, who left Maikel van der Vleuten, ranked number five in the world at the time of the Longines Masters of Paris, and his mount, Dana Blue, in the dust. Reid posted a clear round in a time of 64.08 seconds while van der Vleuten saw rails fall at both the first and final fences.

Tied heading into the third duel, Laura Kraut and Viper Vrombautshoeve Z moved Team USA into the lead with another clear round in a time of 63.01 seconds, beating out Team Europe's Grégory Wathelet and MJT Nevados S, who incurred four faults following a refusal at the last jump. Keeping things exciting for the packed house, Jos Verlooy and Igor gained the edge over Team USA's Reed Kessler and KS Stakki by posting a time of 59.84 seconds versus Kessler's 60.71 seconds and bringing the competition to a tie once more.

The outcome of the first round came down to the final duel between Lauren Hough on Waterford for Team USA and the number four rider in the world, Lorenzo de Luca, on Jeunesse Van't Paradijs for Team Europe. De Luca went first, delivering a dominating clear round in a time of 60.07 seconds while two refusals meant elimination for Hough, giving Team Europe a 3-2 victory in the opening round.

After a quick break and a chance to strategize, the teams came back to the competition ring ignited by the first-round competition. Team USA, considered the underdog, was showing its persistence against a tough European squad.

In the second round, riders and horses would compete over a faults-converted speed course, with three penalties added for every fence down and match-up victories worth two points, placing double the significance on the second round.

Ryan and Cooper redeemed themselves, jumping clear to take two points for Team USA over France's Staut and moving the U.S. into a 4-3 lead.



Longines Masters Paris 2017 Rider Master Cup Manach 1 USA Devin Ryan

Team Europe was not ready to relinquish its lead just yet, with both van der Vleuten and Wathelet besting their Team USA opponents, Reid and Kraut respectively, to move Team Europe to the top of the leaderboard with a commanding 7 to 4 score.

Keeping Team USA in contention, Kessler and KS Stakki bested Team Europe's Verlooy and Igor for two more points, making it 7-6 before it all came down to Hough and de Luca. With another refusal as well as a rail down for Hough, de Luca clinched the match-up win and secured the overall victory for Team Europe with a final score of 9-6.

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spectators can expect the home team to be ready for retaliation in New York on April 28th, 2018.

"There was a little bit of the unexpected and a couple instances of bad luck," said Ridland, who competed for the U.S. in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. "For New York, we will come in with a pretty good strategy and a very good team. The home field advantage will be in our favor in New York. The spectators, riders, and the sport in general will realize what it's all about after seeing this, and I really look forward to that. We'll give them a run for their money!"

No matter the outcome in New York, riders and fans alike can expect top-level equestrian sport.

"When we decided to move our American leg of the Longines Masters to New York, we were living a dream to jump on the grandest stage," said Christophe Ameeuw, CEO of EEM, the organization behind the innovative Longines Masters and the Riders Masters Cup. "Our show has become known for combining glamour, lifestyle, and gastronomy with the best in show jumping; a true 6* experience! We are thrilled we have the opportunity to bring an exciting new competition along with it. The Riders Masters Cup brings the best of equestrian sport together with team competition, and is a showcase for the exhilarating event in the world's biggest media market."

The Riders Masters Cup is presented by EEM, in collaboration with the European Equestrian Federation (EEF) and Longines as a founding partner. Riders will head across the Atlantic for the final showdown of the series on April 28, 2018, during the inaugural Longines Masters of New York. Until then, stay updated on news from each team at www. RidersMastersCup.com, and show support for your favorite team on social media with the hashtag #WaveYourFlag.

Tickets for the Longines Masters of New York and The Riders Masters Cup go on sale in January 2018. For more information, go to

www.LonginesMasters.com



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