

With Saumur Complet, the French start their home stretch until the Tokyo Games

« The Games, it's tomorrow ! » From the mouth of the national coach of the French eventing, Thierry Touzaint (see interview on next page), these words sound like the start of the final preparations before Tokyo. On the only CCI 4 * -L, which they will likely have the opportunity to race before taking off towards the rising sun, the French riders will have everything to prove at the Saumur Complet, from April 29 to May 2. Because of the health crisis and quarantines, foreign competition will be less severe than in past editions. Despite everything, eleven nations will be at the start of the CCI 4 * -L, for 35 riders and 38 horses. Overview of the entrants in this «extra-ordinary» edition.

The French armada led by five Olympic champions!

France is a major nation in world eventing. Judge for yourself: for this 35th edition of Saumur Complet, a third of the fifteen French riders entered in the CCI 4 * -L are ... Olympic champions! The idol of Rio 2016, gold medal with the France team, individual silver, **Astier Nicolas**, is back in Maine-et-Loire, after a last participation in 2018. For the occasion, he will be accompanied by his **Babylon de Gamma**, barely ten years old, one of the youngest horses in the race and already very comfortable. In 2019, the couple won the CCI 4 * -S (short) from Blair Castle in England; last year, for their only international outing of the year, they finished seventh in the CCI 3 * -L Grand Complet (Haras du Pin), completing two clear cross and obstacle courses, and in time assigned. **Astier Nicolas's** teammate in Brazil, **Karim Laghouag**, will also be there, at the helm of 14-year-old Triton Fontaine, who was on the verge of a significant victory in 2019 during the CCI 4 * -L in Pratoni del Vivaro and finally offered his rider second place. Experienced, the couple have already raced in CCI 5 * -L, notably in Pau in 2020. Also very experienced, **Arnaud Boiteau** on **Quoriano * IFCE** play at home. Together they ran a European Championship in 2013 and the CCI 5 * -L de Pau. The squire of the Cadre noir de Saumur is also Olympic champion with the French team in 2004. Two of his teammates at the time, also gold medal winners, will also be present in Saumur: the "archange" **Nicolas Touzaint** will present **Eboli**, twelve years old, who will run the second CCI 4 * -L of his career at Saumur Complet, after that of Lignières last year. The couple finished sixth after a clear cross and obstacle test over time. Finally, **Cédric Lyard** will be associated with **Unum De'Or**, thirteen years old, who will participate in Maine-et-Loire in his first CCI 4 * -L.



Facing France, ten other nations

It is currently the case for international riders as for ordinary citizens: it is difficult for everyone to cross borders without having to then observe a more or less long quarantine depending on the country. Despite the constraints, ten foreign federations responded to Saumur Complet's invitation: **Switzerland, Italy, Brazil, Luxembourg, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan and Lithuania.**

Reigning Olympic vice-champion with the German team, **Julia Krajewski** will take the start of the CCI 4 * -L at the reins of **Amande de B'Neville**, eleven years old, who will race at Saumur Complet her second CCI 4 * -L after that of Strzegom in Poland last year.

With five riders each, Switzerland and Italy will also be well represented. On the Swiss side, **Mélody Johner** will be associated with her **Toubleu du Rueire**, to whom nothing has resisted lately: since September, the couple has finished second in the CCI 3 * -S in Avenches in Switzerland, second in the CCI 3 * -L in Strzegom in Poland, fifth in CCI 4 * -S in Pratoni del Vivaro in Italy and second in CCI3 * -S in Montelibretti in Italy. The Italian delegation will be led by **Pietro Sandei**, three times in bronze by team at the 2007, 2009 and 2017 European Championships. He will play at the reins of **Rubis de Prere**, an experienced sixteen-year-old Selle Français, who did not however go out in international competition last year. Finally, note the participation of two riders, best representatives of their respective nations, in the current world ranking: **Carlos Parro** for Brazil, who will enter two horses on the CCI 4 * -L of Saumur Complet, **Calcourt Landline** and **Goliath**, and **Christian Chabot** for Luxembourg, in the saddle of **Barlison**.

The last French performance in the flagship event of Saumur Complet dates back to 2015 and the victory of Mathieu Lemoine and Bart L. In 2021, the French can dream of achievement at home. One thing is already certain: the Australian Christopher Burton, winner here in 2012 (with Haruzac), 2016 (with Santano II), 2018 (with Quality Purdey) and 2019 (with Polystar I), will not run this year for a fifth Saumur victory. For the rest: meet from April 29 to May 2, at the racecourse of Verrie.

Follow Saumur Complet remotely

To ensure enthusiasts and families a follow-up of the competitions of the weekend, in spite of the closed door, the Equestrian Committee of Saumur sets up a Web TV, accessible free of charge to all from the **Saumur.org** site. From April 29, this web TV will offer two channels: a "SC Sport" channel on which the CCI 4 * -L events will be broadcast live; and a «SC Mag» channel, which will offer reports, round tables and interviews on different themes: horse, culture, outdoor sports, nature and tourism. The event will also be widely publicized on social media with exclusive behind-the-scenes access.



Three questions to... Thierry Touzaint, national eventing coach «The CCI 4 * -L of Saumur Complet will be a real barometer for French riders»

What place do you give to Saumur Complet in the 2021 season for French riders? As we know, 2021 is a «big» year, with both the Olympic Games and a European Championship.

Thierry TOUZAIN : For a coach, but also for riders, a CCI 4 * Long is always important: it is one of the highest levels in the hierarchy of competitions. This edition of Saumur Complet will be even more important as there will not be any other competitions of a higher level, that is CCI 5* before the Olympic Games. The Saumur Complet CCI 4 * -L is a real barometer, with its long distances and fast speeds: it is a real stress test for our national pairs. As the only CCI 4 * -L that we will have in France, Saumur Complet is an obligatory passage for the French duos, for their qualifications for the big deadlines. Some French horses, those who do not have much to prove as we know their track records and their potential, will not be present at Saumur; on the other hand, for the others, Saumur Complet allows them to gain a lot of experience and, for the federal staff, to judge their form.

In 2021, due to the very strict quarantine rules imposed by many countries, some foreign headliners had to give up Saumur Complet. Does their absence upset the coach of the French team?

Thierry TOUZAIN : For the preparation of French horses, these absences are in no way problematic: it does not change anything. It is true that it is always good to be able to face the best: it is an excellent barometer to know where the national riders stand in relation to their foreign opponents. But note that all countries will be facing this same problem this year until the Olympics; we will all be equal since no one will have really been able to see what he is worth compared to foreigners. Historically, England has always been somewhat privileged as many foreign nations meet in England, including in national competitions. Before the Olympic Games in Rio, the French had taken part in the Chatsworth competition: they had shone and it was important to show the entire eventing world the very high level of the French clan. This year, it will not be possible: fortunately, the reputation of French eventing is currently excellent. So it's less of a problem if this year we can't show foreigners the value of our horses as we did five years ago. At present, we cannot work on a very precise timetable abroad; for England, with the Covid, rhinopneumonitis and Brexit, it will be very complicated to send French riders there. All the more for the Games, it's tomorrow! After Saumur Complet, the riders will then run the Lion D'Angers and Vittel competitions, then follow up with preparation courses.

In this context, what will be the objective of the Blues for the 2021 edition of Saumur Complet ?

Thierry TOUZAIN : Winning, quite simply and as always! The French have some fine cards to play; I would therefore be disappointed if France did not take the top step of the podium this year at Saumur.