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FREDRICSON AND FUCHS LOOK SET FOR BATTLE IN WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

World number one, Sweden's **Peder Fredricson**, threw down the challenge to everyone else with his super-smooth last-to-go victory in last night's Regione Siciliana Grand Prix qualifier at Jumping Verona 2021. However he wondered afterwards if he might have used up too much of his fire-power when steering H&M Christian K home for the win with a brilliant ride.

And when asked who his biggest rival will be for maximum points in tomorrow's Italian leg of the **Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Western European League** he didn't hesitate to reply. "Martin Fuchs", he said, referring to the Swiss star who is also riding the crest of a wave right now.



Photo JV/M.Proli

Unstoppable train

Fredricson has been like an unstoppable train since mid-summer, his gritty round with All In that clinched team gold for Sweden at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, and the individual silver medal he also brought back, giving him super-hero status in his home country.

When the Longines world rankings were updated a week ago he remained at the very top of the leaderboard, and already leading going into the last Grand Prix of the 2021 Global Champions Tour in Samorin, Slovakia two weeks ago he clinched the series title with a tenth-place finish. Confirmed as the highest earner in the GCT this season he is now targeting the finale at the Prague Playoffs later this month where there is a massive €1.25m more up for grabs in the Super Grand Prix.

But first he has some business to do in Verona, and the maximum 20 points on offer to the winner of tomorrow's Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ are clearly in his sights.

Flying form

However **Martin Fuchs** is also in flying form and filled with confidence after collecting team gold and individual silver at the FEI European Jumping Championships in Riesenbeck, Germany in September and then galloping to victory in last weekend's second leg of the World Cup series at Lyon in France.



Photo JV/M.Proli

At 29 years old he is 20 years younger than Fredricson, but his career record is already staggering. He's a double-Olympian, took individual silver at the FEI World Equestrian Games in 2018, was runner-up to fellow-countryman Steve Guerdat at the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Final in Gothenburg in 2019 and was crowned individual European champion later that summer.

Fuchs goes into tomorrow's feature class in Verona lying fourth in the world rankings, and the hot field of 40 starters includes seven of the top twelve - Fredricson in the number one slot, Germany's **Daniel Deusser** (2), **Fuchs** (4), Brazil's **Marlon Zanotelli** (6), Switzerland's **Steve Guerdat** (8), Frenchman **Kevin Staut** (11) and Austria's **Max Kuhner** (12).

Legendary

The legendary Briton, 66-year-old **John Whitaker**, is drawn first to go while Spain's **Sergio Alvarez Moya** will be next into the ring followed by Italy's **Riccardo Pisani**. Running twelfth will be Peder Fredricson's brother, **Jens Fredricson** who already picked up valuable points when finishing third in the opening qualifier at Oslo in Norway three weeks ago, but there is unlikely to any love lost if the pair find themselves pitted against each other in the jump-off.

Yesterday's other winners, America's **Jessica Springsteen** and Belgium's **Olivier Philippaerts** are also likely to be strong contenders but it's a world-class field from start to finish and Peder Fredricson won't have the advantage tomorrow that he had last night.

"It was a big jump-off with many riders and it was very fast, but I was last to go which was an advantage because you know what you have to do and today was my day!", he said. He is drawn 34th to go tomorrow while Fuchs will run third from last, in 38th place, so if both manage to qualify for the second-round jump-off then it will be the on-form Swiss rider who will have the advantage this time out.

It promises to be a mighty battle, so don't miss a moment.....

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