

# HARNESS RACING UPDATE

Monday, January 29, 2024



Gerard Forni

French-bred **Idao de Tillard** (Clément Duvaldestin) was the favorite among the fans that packed Vincennes.

## Emotions flow for Duvaldestin family as favorite **Idao de Tillard** wins the Prix d'Amérique

*Hokkaido Jiel was second and Joviality finished a strong third in the \$1,090,000 event at Vincennes in Paris.*

by Thomas Hedlund



French trainer Thierry Duvaldestin had the good fortune to train Ready Cash for owner (and the horse's previous trainer) Philippe Allaire when the horse was more mature and the objective waiting was the Prix d'Amérique.

It was a bold decision by Allaire to turn Ready Cash over to Duvaldestin. Allaire had already proven his ability to shape and train the very best horses bred in France. But, he believed Ready Cash needed a new trainer and Duvaldestin gave Allaire his victory in the Prix d'Amérique – twice.

Ready Cash won the Prix d'Amérique two times with Duvaldestin as trainer (2011-12).

And the likeable trainer from Normandy has had his chances to repeat in the PdA, but the truth is probably that he has never trained a horse with the same talent as **Idao de Tillard** – Ready Cash excluded, of course.

Idao de Tillard (Severino) was one of the most interesting trotters in the 2023 Prix d'Amérique field, but on that day a year ago he wasn't really in his best condition.





## ABOUT HARNESS RACING UPDATE

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**Editor:** Dave Briggs

**Associate Editor:** Debbie Little

**Editorial Designer:** Sieu Truong

**Post Production:** Dave Landry

**Technology Services:** Brian Fuller

**Graphic Design, Ads & Placement:** Lisa Bihuniak

**Advertising Sales:**

Wilma Van Vaerenbergh

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**Results & Stats Editors:**

Lisa Duong & Lucy Duong

**Founder:** Bill Finley

**Contributors:** Claus Andersen, Garnet Barnsdale, Tim Bojarski, Murray Brown, Jerry Connors, Frank Coto, Paul Delean, Bill Finley, Joe FitzGerald, Dean Gillette, Adam Hamilton, Thomas Hedlund, Bill Heller, Bob Heyden, Dean Hoffman, Victoria Howard, Melissa Keith, Dave Landry, Lauren Lee, Dave Little, Debbie Little, Chris Lomon, David Mattia, Trey Nosrac, Tom Pedulla, Andrea Pietrzak, James Platz, Bob Roberts, Sandra Snyder, Brett Sturman, Jay Wolf & more ([view all contributors here](#)).

**GET IN TOUCH WITH HRU**

PO Box 230 | Millwood, NY | 10546 |

Telephone: (226) 374-9999

**Editor/News Stories:**

[editor@harnessracingupdate.com](mailto:editor@harnessracingupdate.com)

**Advertising:**

[advertising@harnessracingupdate.com](mailto:advertising@harnessracingupdate.com)

**Customer Service:**

[customerservice@harnessracingupdate.com](mailto:customerservice@harnessracingupdate.com)

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**Gerard Forni  
Idao de  
Tillard  
(Clément  
Duvaldestin)  
winning the  
\$1,090,000  
Prix  
d'Amerique  
on Sunday at  
Vincennes in  
Paris.**

Flash forward a year and all the preparation races towards this year's Prix d'Amerique were satisfying and Idao de Tillard became the race's favorite early into the Paris winter meet.

Reports told us that Idao de Tillard had been sick for some days a couple of weeks ago, which opened up the race for speculation about whether the 6-year-old son of Severino could have recovered well enough for a tough event like the Prix d'Amérique.

Turns out he was in fit health. We know that now, because Sunday's (Jan. 28) triumph in the \$1,090,000 Prix d'Amérique was nothing more than a demonstration in class and strength and there was no doubt about whether the best horse won. The best horse won.

Idao de Tillard had to race four wide during the race's initial 700-800 meters. When he eventually landed outside of leader

*“ I was very nervous today. We had a lot to lose, it felt like that, but at the same time I knew that we had a horse that could win if he was in good enough shape. To win this race today is... just enormously big and I'm very happy that we managed to go all the way. ”*

*~ Thierry Duvaldestin*





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**In a great family triumph, Clément Duvaldestin drove Idao de Tillard to victory for his father, trainer Thierry Duvaldestin.**

Hail Mary with 1,250 meters to go, driver Clément Duvaldestin just watched the inside leader and the horse in the pocket, Joviality, to make sure that he could control the race with his horse, who still seemed to have plenty of power to use at the top of the uphill part of the track.

Leader Hail Mary was beaten with a quarter of a mile to go and Joviality found space to use her speed when Clément put Idao de Tillard into turbo gear as the field reached the home stretch.

Idao de Tillard carved out a 2-length advantage and held that distance to the chasing opponents when he hit the wire in a mile rate of 1:55.1 over 1.6 miles. Hokkaido Jiel bested Joviality in the hunt for the silver medal so Joviality claimed a very strong third place in her first Prix d'Amérique.

Thierry Duvaldestin watched the race from beside the track and was visibly emotional watching his son, Clément, steer Idao de Tillard to victory in France's biggest harness race.

"I was very nervous today," Thierry said with tears in his eyes. "We had a lot to lose, it felt like that, but at the same time I knew that we had a horse that could win if he was in good

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Afterward, the father-and-son team of trainer Thierry Duvaldestin (far right) and driver Clément Duvaldestin (blue colors) feted Idao de Tillard in the Vincennes winner's circle.



enough shape. To win this race today is... just enormously big and I'm very happy that we managed to go all the way."

Driver Clément seemed greatly composed after the big win, but said afterward he was not all that calm.

"I tried to concentrate today, tried to do what I've been thinking of regarding the race," Clément said. "When we crossed the wire, my body exploded in emotions. I'm so proud of this horse and he is just so strong."

Idao de Tillard was the favorite that handled the pressure exceptionally and the same must be said about his driver. Clément is not one of the most merited drivers in France. Yet, he topped them all on this day and his nerves were in the right place.

Behind the top three-horses, Go On Boy was the contender that people talked about after the race. His finish from last position (with 175 meters to go) to fourth place was just unreal. It's worth looking at the replay of Prix d'Amérique, which is [here](#).

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