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Thrills and surprises for the over 4000 spectators on hand for the "Vincenzo Muccioli Challenge Acqua Uliveto Grand Prix", final class in the three day San Patrignano CSI5*. The two protagonists who kept the crowd on the edge of their seats were Rolf Ludi and Heiner Fischer, course designers that challenge the forty riders, letting only ten pass through to the jump off. The most difficult jump was a vertical made of planks, 1.6 meters high right in the center. Some of the best riders made errors at this obstacle, like favorite Belgian rider Jos Lansink, Germany's Marcus Ehning and San Patrignano's own Jerry Smit.

At the end of the jump off, where each horse and rider duo seemed to better the last, the 50,000 euro prize went to Dutch rider Harry Smolders on Walnut de Muze. Smolders was the last one to enter the arena and went clean with a time of campo 39.23, surpassing the leader, Germany's Ludger Beerbaum on Enorm. Beerbaum had a time of 40.38 and seemed sure to win, but had to settle for second place. Third also went to a German rider, Thomas Muhlbauer on Asti Spumante. Fourth and only two tenths of a second from first was Italy's Gianni Govoni. After an afternoon victory in the "Ams" prize, he rode into the Grand Prix on Joyau D'opale, becoming the highest placed rider in the show.

Happy and satisfied, that's how the winning rider described himself, in his own words: "For me this evening everything went perfectly. The footing, the obstacles, my horse. I was lucky to go last, already knowing Beerbaum's results. I went as quickly as I could and it went well". Although he didn't win, his teammate was also happy with his results: "Only ten horses made it to the barrage - that's less than a fourth of the participants. His means the course was difficult, selective and spectacular. It was a great class and very exciting for the crowds. Smolders deserves compliments for his speed".

Quelle: San Patrignano PO