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## barons & masters

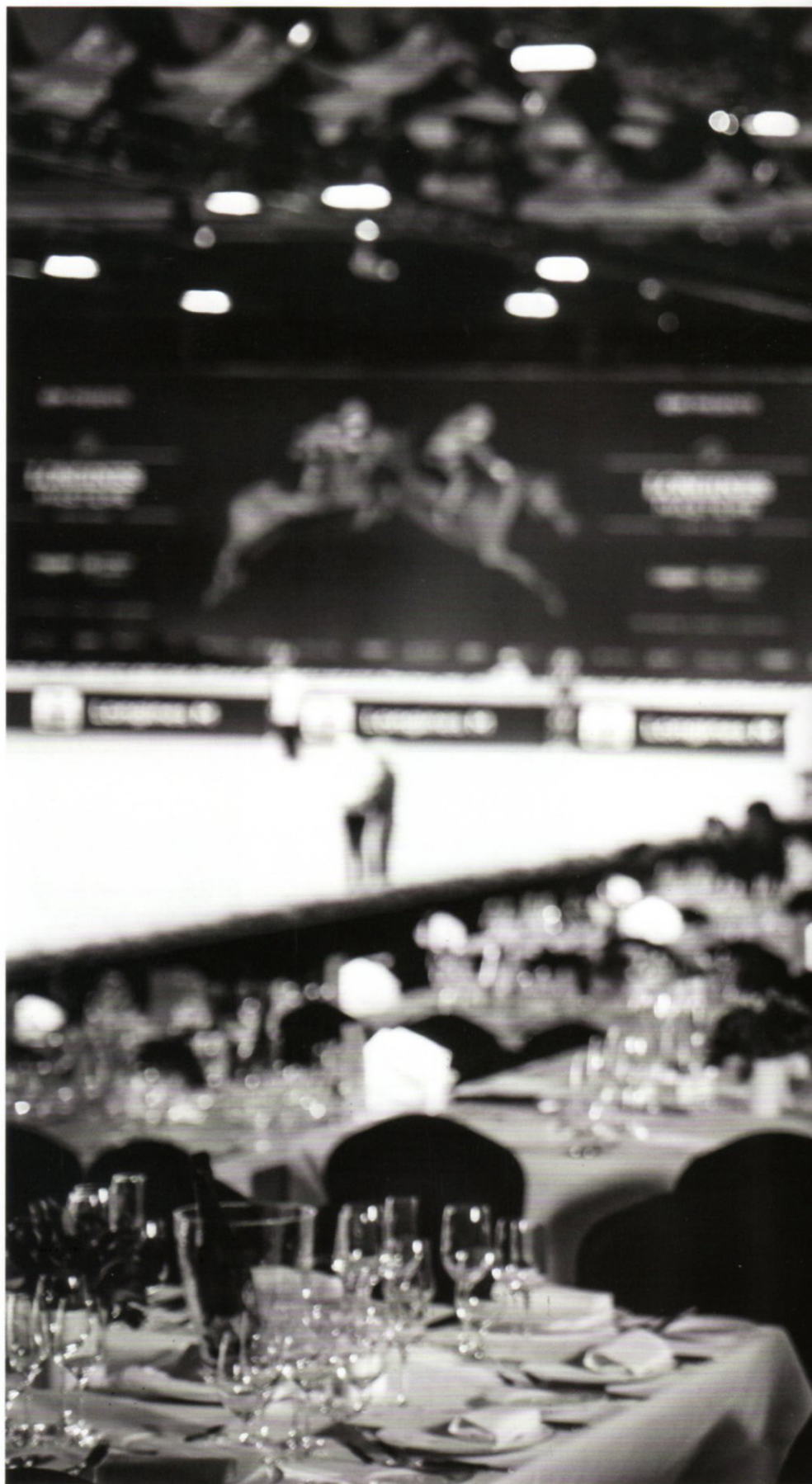
Mamie Chen learns how a young Champagne brand with an old family name is among the winners at the Longines Masters.

SIXTY-FOUR HORSES board a flight in Belgium, bound for the Hong Kong leg of the Longines Masters, the prestigious intercontinental show-jumping series. The elite of the competitions generally travel in pallets of three horses, though some of the more valued get "business class" accommodations for two. Despite the stable-to-stable journey of twenty hours, these are true road warriors, accustomed to long travel and ready to turn in peak performances in the Longines Grand Prix as well as the Longines Speed Challenge, the fastest event in the world.

In addition to these center-stage equestrian events, the Longines Masters is an annual celebration of entertainment, gastronomy, and art that has become a fixture on the calendars of the three host cities. And from the star-studded Los Angeles scene, to a Paris after-party with two thousand on the dance floor until three in the morning, to a group of Hong Kong VIPs closing a private jet sale at the event, one man who has seen it all is Frédéric Mairesse, Managing Director at Champagne Barons de Rothschild.

The brand only released its first nonvintage Champagne in 2009, but it has already been named official supplier of the Longines Masters for four years in Paris and three in HK and LA. And while Champagne Barons de Rothschild may be a relative upstart, it is backed by the wealth of experience of all three branches of the legendary Bordeaux family.

"My importer invited me to visit him," Mairesse recalls of his introduction to the Paris event, "and he said, 'We drink bad Champagne there when we could be drinking yours!' Our company is small, so we have to be precise and focused, and the Longines Masters matches are what we do perfectly."



RED DOG STUDIO











Mairesse was particularly interested in the Hong Kong leg. "When I joined in 2010," he says, "I targeted the Asian market for development. The potential for this type of top-quality brand with a Chardonnay-oriented style and taste is huge." The strategy has been a marked success, with Asia accounting for over 40 percent of their total bottle sales last year. Cross-relationships with brands like Longines and Hermès work particularly well in Hong Kong, where top Champagnes at events are a dime a dozen and the clientele is eager for interesting stories like that of Champagne Barons de Rothschild.

But Mairesse has been careful not to grow the business too quickly. Volume and quick profits are not the goal when dealing with the Rothschilds – their nonvintage Champagne is aged over twice as long as the legal minimum. "Five years for you and me is fifteen for them," says Mairesse. "When I showed my first projections, Éric de Rothschild remarked, 'I'd be more comfortable if you didn't go so fast. Remember, we spent a hundred and fifty years building up Lafite Rothschild. You can't do the job in five years.' And he was right."

Despite, or perhaps because of, the challenges, the Rothschilds have set their sights on creating an iconic blanc de blancs Champagne. When a consultant warned them that chardonnay grapes would be expensive, rare, difficult to buy, and long to age, Benjamin de Rothschild responded, "Okay, thank you, we'll do that then."

With the composure that comes from long-term vision, the family will bide their time in acquiring vineyards in the grand crus villages, recognizing that this is a Champagne for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. 16

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FRÉDÉRIC MAIRESSE

六十四匹骏马在比利时登机，准备远赴香港参加享誉全球的洲际马术障碍系列赛事——浪琴表马术大师赛。运抵菁英赛马的机舱里，通常三匹参赛马会安顿在同一货板，某些身价较高的骏马则升等「商务舱」，两匹共享一块货板。尽管经历了二十小时拥挤的长途飞行，它们可是货真价实的跑跑斗士，习于长途旅程，随时蓄势待发，等着在浪琴表大奖赛和被誉为全球速度最快赛事的速度挑战赛里一展身手，缔造巅峰表现。

除了万众瞩目的马术赛事，浪琴表马术大师赛亦是三大主办城市一年一度集娱乐、美食和艺术的焦点盛事。从众星云集的洛杉矶开始，第二站巴黎以欢呼延续——两千人在派对舞池里狂欢至凌晨三点，直至最后由一众香港贵宾买下私人飞机，系列赛事终告圆满结束。当中法国罗斯柴尔德家族香槟首席执行官总裁 Frédéric Mairesse 先生全都躬逢其盛。

罗斯柴尔德家族品牌 2009 年推出第一支非年份香槟，就获浪琴表钦点为马术大师赛正式供应商，至今在巴黎已有四年，在香港和洛杉矶则为三年。法国罗斯柴尔德家族香槟看似以黑马之姿骤然崛起，背后其实是有传奇波尔多家族三大分支的丰富经验作后盾。

忆起参与巴黎赛事的经验，Frédéric 说：「其实是进口商邀请我到访，他说『我们喝的香槟都不怎么样，早就该喝你们的！』我们公司规模很小，所以必须准确且聚焦，浪琴表马术大师赛就是我们能至臻完美的目标。」

Frédéric 对浪琴表在香港的马术大师赛尤其感兴趣。他表示：「2010 年赞助时，我们将目标放在开拓亚洲市场，这种顶级品牌，以夏多内为主体的风格与品味，肯定潜力无穷。」果不其然，这项策略大获成功，去年的亚洲瓶装酒销量占了整体销量逾四成。不仅如此，法国罗斯柴尔德家族香槟与浪琴表还有爱马仕的跨领域品牌合作在香港尤其成功，各种盛事均可见顶级香槟，而且客户对他们有趣的品牌故事津津乐道。

然而 Frédéric 步步为营，避免事业版图扩张太快。他们的目标并非香槟数量与盈利一下子大增，反之，罗斯柴尔德家族的非年份香槟陈年时间比法定最短时间长两倍之多。Frédéric 解释道：「对你来说，可能陈年五年就足够，对我们而言则要十五年。我初次预估时间时，Éric de Rothschild 的评语是『我建议不要太快。记住，我们花了 150 年打造 Lafite Rothschild，你只想花五年酿造好收成是不可能的』，他说的没错。」

尽管困难重重，或者说正因为挑战险峻，罗斯柴尔德家族将眼光放在酿制最经典的白中白极品香槟。曾有位顾问警告他们，夏多内葡萄价格昂贵、稀有、难买且陈年时间长，男爵 Benjamin de Rothschild 只回应道：「好的，谢谢你的建议。」

在此长期愿景下，罗斯柴尔德展现出不同凡响的泰然自若，他们耐心地选购特级酒庄，因为他们很清楚，家族香槟是要留传给后代子子孙孙的。16