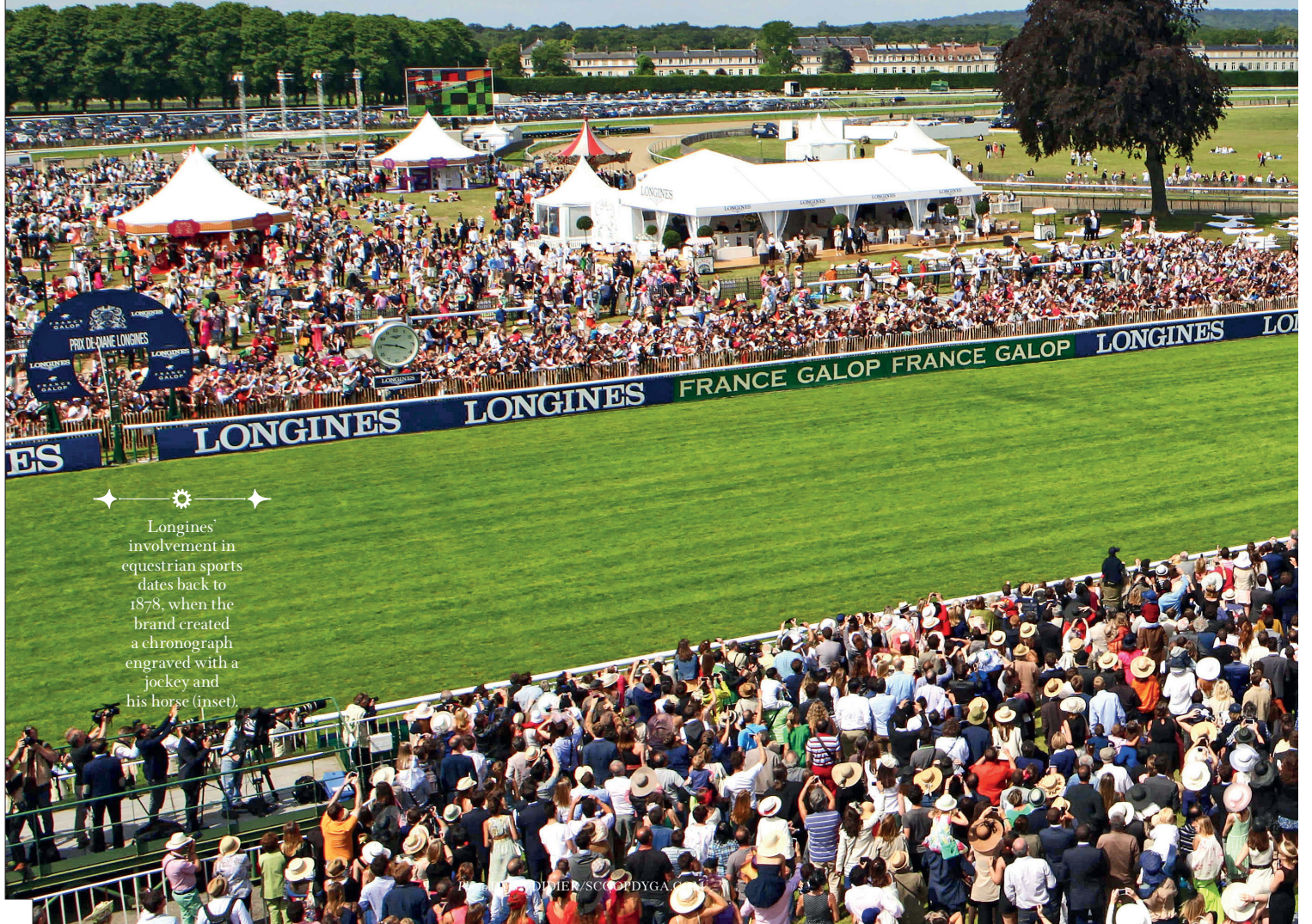


TIME FOR THE LADIES

For Longines, it's the women, not the men, who make the brand. This summer, it dedicated one weekend to its female customers.

By HO YUN KUAN



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 Longines' involvement in equestrian sports dates back to 1878, when the brand created a chronograph engraved with a jockey and his horse (inset).

PHOTO: DUMIER/SCORPYGAL



Lush manes tossed in the wind in a hypnotic dance; toned muscles flexed, forming taut lines highlighted by the summer sun. The fillies – young female horses below four or five years of age – galloped past. It was 15 June, a day when no boys (of the equine variety) were allowed on the racetrack of the Hippodrome de Chantilly.

The Prix de Diane, an annual horse race sponsored by Swiss watchmaker Longines, is all about the fairer sex. The competing fillies were the undisputed stars

that Sunday afternoon, but the night before, it was the ladies who took centre stage during the Longines Ladies Awards, which saw four female professionals recognised for their work in horse welfare, horse training and promotion of the equestrian sport.

Such focus on the ladies is unusual but it all makes sense when one looks at the numbers. “Ladies’ watches make up more than 50 per cent of our sales worldwide,” reveals Walter von Kanel, CEO of Longines. Part of the brand’s appeal, he believes, is its insistence on staying





true to its design philosophy. “The women don’t buy our bigger watches, so we have always kept our designs classic.”

So classic it is again, with the steel ladies’ watch from the Conquest Classic collection presented during the Prix de Diane. Sporting a round case with a link bracelet, the model is a three-hand with a date complication at three o’clock. It is beautifully set with 30 diamonds totalling 0.501 carats on the bezel, and 12 diamonds totalling 0.048 carats marking the indexes on its white mother-of-pearl dial.

Perfectly embodying this less-is-more ethos is brand ambassador Kate Winslet, who has been with Longines since 2010. Present at the Prix de Diane as a special guest, she speaks to *Robb Report* about her time-keeping habits.

Horology is quite male-dominated. Why do you enjoy timepieces? I am a mother, so I am trying to do many things in a day. I am also late for everything! So I really need to wear a watch, be on time, and achieve everything I need to achieve in a day. It is very empowering.

What do you look for in a watch? I appreciate functionality. I actually like men’s watches. I have one from the Longines Heritage collection, which is my first Longines watch. It is chunky and I know it is not going to break if I hit it against something.



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Above, from left:
Winslet; the Conquest Classic
steel ladies’ watch.

“It is really enjoyable for me to be a part of a brand that’s grounded and has the sense of family.”

How does the style of watches you choose reflect your personality?
My style is very simple. I just dress the way that makes me feel comfortable. I don’t want to make statements through the things I wear, but through the things I am doing.

What attracted you to Longines? The company is run exactly the way it has been since it first started. Longines has a gigantic factory with many people that it really takes care of, who have been with the brand for many years. Walter (Von Kanel) was telling me last night over dinner that his wife was actually the first between them to work for Longines. She told him this is a really great company and that he should get a job here. So he applied and started as an office boy – I don’t know the exact job

title, but it was from very low down. He worked his way up and now he is CEO. He is so dedicated. It is really enjoyable for me to be a part of a brand that’s grounded and has the sense of family. Those are the values that are important to me and that’s what really motivated me to join them.

Which is your favourite Longines timepiece? It is a vintage piece I bought that is from the 1940s. I found it in an antique shop in South London while shopping for a clock. It has a rectangular face and a black strap – really simple and elegant. I wear it all the time and I’m quite careful with it. I found it just after I signed with Longines and it was purely by coincidence. They (at Longines) love the fact that I have this watch. www.longines.com

This year’s Longines Ladies Awards were presented to Sylvie Robert (third from left) and (fifth to seventh from left) Patricia Laffon-Parias (representing Criquette Head-Maarek), Jing Li and Bo Derek.

