

Case Crowns its Best Operators at the 2015 Rodeo International Final

Turin, 22 October 2015

For the second year running, Janne Ensio Leppänen from Finland was *Overall Winner* at the 2015 Case Rodeo International Final, the annual competition for the best construction equipment operators.

The event was held from October 16th to 18th at the Case Customer Centre in Monthyon, near Paris. Leppänen emerged victorious over 43 highly skilled operators representing 18 countries, including Germany, Italy, France, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Baltic countries, the Netherlands, Finland and UK which took the *'Winning Team'* award based on the excellent results of its drivers. All the finalists who took part were the winners of the national Rodeo competitions.

This three-day event combined the competitive atmosphere of the Rodeo with a friendly and elegant environment and offered operators, media representatives and the Case team a unique chance to strengthen their relationships and experience a festive gala evening surrounded by the royal charm of the historic Abbaye de Royaumont,.

The Best Operators Enter the Arena

All the finalists spent the first day at the Case Customer Centre for afternoon of familiarisation sessions and equipment training. Then on the morning of October 17th, after a welcome speech by centre manager Patricia Legros, they lined up for the competition. Wearing the traditional cowboy's hat, a western shirt and a distinctive scarf for each country, the operators demonstrated their exceptional skills in four challenges of ultimate machine speed and precision operating.

The first challenge *"Wild Wheels"* involved drivers using a 321F ZB compact wheel loader to transport a pallet through a slalom path before placing it in a perfect vertical position on another pallet to display the Case logo. This round went to Bendt Risom from Denmark, followed by Primoz Erjavek from Slovenia and Norbert Kessler from Austria.

The *"Lawless Loader"* round required the operators to drive a TR270 compact track loader with the bucket filled with water and plastic ducks through a slalom path between cones on a sloped surface. Leppänen won the game by carrying out the operation in the shortest time without draining the water and with the maximum number of ducks in the bucket. Richard Christian from the UK secured the second place while German operator Marc Abresch got third place.



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In the "Cherokee Crawler" challenge, operators were asked to insert a pin, hooked on the bucket of a CX210D crawler excavator, into four small tubes in a specific order. Maxime Bruetschy from France won first place, followed by Krzysztof Stachecki from Poland and Thomas Kristensen from Denmark.

The last challenge was the "Big Thunder Backhoe". Using a 695ST backhoe loader, competitors had to take, one by one, five balls placed on five bases at different distances and score as many baskets as possible. James Binks from the UK won the challenge by scoring five baskets in the shortest time. Second and third place went respectively to Janne Hirsikangas from Sweden and Norwegian operator Alf Taskdal.

Leppänen will hold the Case Rodeo title for another year and will automatically be invited to the 2016 competition. He also won a trip to Chicago and a visit to Case's renowned Tomahawk Customer Center in Wisconsin, USA.

During the day, there was also a special event with operators competing against each other in an ultimate bull riding test on the indomitable "Mechanical Bull", with Swedish operator Niklas Rydholm able to hold on for the longest. Second-place podium was for Danish operator Bendt Risom.

The Competition That Is More than a Competition

High spirits and an enthusiastic atmosphere created the ideal environment for this three-day event. On the first evening, participants enjoyed a relaxed, informal dinner, accompanied by some very pleasant French champagne. There was a particularly memorable moment after the dinner when a farewell video was played to celebrate Dave Garner, sales and marketing support specialist, who is retiring from the company after 50 years of service.

On the morning of October 17th, while operators were warming up for the Rodeo, media representatives were invited to visit the training school of Mario Luraschi, a French equestrian stuntman and horse trainer who is internationally recognized for his involvement in more than 400 movies and for his own international shows. The tour at Luraschi's school, based north-east of Paris, included a visit at the stables, which had more than 40 horses, plus a live demonstration of the finest *haute école* riding given by Luraschi and his students.

The Gala Evening took place in the charming Royaumont Abbey. Built between 1228 and 1235 by Louis IX, King of France, and later canonized as Saint Louis, the abbey is a pearl of Gothic architecture and the best-preserved Cistercian abbey in the Île-de-France region.

Its simple layout, unadorned buildings and isolated location near Asnières-sur-Oise in Val-d'Oise, approximately 30 km north of Paris, bespeak its origins as a Cistercian monastery. Closely associated with the monarchy until the French Revolution and dissolved as national property in 1791, this historic monument is now a permanent gathering place for artists and arts-related activities.

A chic atmosphere, which mixed the present codes of elegance with decorations inspired from the old Far West farms, welcomed the invitees. After an aperitif in what was the Monks' Kitchen, participants entered the Lay Brothers' Refectory for the Rodeo Awards Ceremony.

Giampiero Biglia, marketing director CNH Industrial Construction Equipment for Europe, Africa and Middle East, welcomed attendees and pointed out how important it was for the Case team to share this kind of experience with customers.

The best operators of each Rodeo challenge were called on stage to be applauded. The three operators from the UK received *Winning Team* recognition and celebrated the retirement of Dave Garner who accompanied them on stage. The audience waited for the announcement of the overall champion and welcomed Leppänen with prolonged applause as he stepped out to receive the recognition for the second time in his career.

After the ceremony, participants were invited to the Monks' Refectory for the Gala Dinner, accompanied by the live music of *Holy Wood*, one of the most important bands in the French country music scene. The dinner was also animated by four dancers who ignited the "saloon" with a country show and offered participants the opportunity to try the typical country-western line dance.

A Success Growing Year After Year

The Case Rodeo Championship confirmed itself as a must-attend event for operators, customers and dealers. Started in March in Enns, Austria, the Rodeo moved quickly across Europe through 30 national rounds. The last round before the grand Final was organised by dealer Romana Diesel during the October Truck Fest in Rome.

"Great operators and machines, a highly technical competition and a fabulous time: these are the ingredients of the Rodeo's growing success, year after year," said Biglia. "Every day, operators are asked to demonstrate their prowess on the jobsite. They are placing pipe in narrow trenches, manoeuvring equipment around obstacles and excavating to exact levels. The Case Rodeo gives them a unique chance to show off their skills in a fun, competitive way. This year the awards have been distributed among many winners coming from a variety of countries which is a significant result, confirming the high level of expertise of our operators throughout the continent."

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