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Sweden's Readly Express defeats French champion Bold Eagle in thrilling Prix d'Amérique

The 2018 Prix d'Amérique is a race that harness racing fans all over the world will remember for a long time.

by Thomas Hedlund



Gerard Forni

Readly Express (8, Björn Goop) held off two-time defending Prix d'Amérique champ Bold Eagle (18, Franck Nivard) and Propulsion (Örjan Kihlström, black helmet) to win the \$1.24 million classic Sunday afternoon at Vincennes.

Three of the world's top trotters painted a picture in fantastic colors in Sunday afternoon's \$1.24 million (€1,000,000) Prix d'Amérique at Vincennes in Paris, with Readly Express out-duelling two-time defending champion Bold Eagle and American-bred Propulsion in 1:54.3, a mark that tied the race record set by Bold Eagle a year ago.

Propulsion (Muscle Hill) was sent forward early by his driver Örjan Kihlström and the duo was in front a half-mile

into the 1.7-mile race. To few people's surprise, Propulsion was soon joined at the front by Bird Parker (Ready Cash), who had two recent victories in the Paris prep races.

Kihlström had two choices: force Propulsion and keep the lead, or let Bird Parker steer the race. Kihlström chose a trip in the pocket.

Drivers Björn Goop behind Readly Express (Ready Cash)



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Afterward, the top three finishing drivers – from left: Bold Eagles' Franck Nivard, Ready Express' Björn Goop and Propulsion's Örjan Kihlström - were hailed in the winner's circle for a fantastic race.

and Franck Nivard behind Bold Eagle (Ready Cash) made wise tactical decisions throughout the Prix d'Amérique. Perfectly placed in second line, both of the drivers waited until the final turn to make a serious attack three wide. Bold Eagle was in perfect shape in the back of Ready Express and the French audience was hoping Bold Eagle would take his third victory in a row when the field turned for home.

But Ready Express is a phenomenal horse and Goop an extraordinary driver. Just before the stretch, Charly du Noyer made a break, which opened a hole for Propulsion, but Goop quickly filled the gap and Kihlström had to go four wide before he accelerated. Goop had control of both Propulsion and attacking Bold Eagle on the outside. In a thrilling final 150 meters, Bold Eagle tried to pass Ready Express, but fell short at the wire.

Instead, Ready Express, with just 24 career starts before

the race, made Sweden a winning team and the mile-equivalent time of 1:54.3 tied the race record recorded by Bold Eagle in 2017.

"This is unbelievable. I haven't won the Olympic gold medals in any sport, but I assume this is what it feels like," trainer Timo Nurmos said after the biggest victory of his career.

The Finnish-born trainer is well known for his ability to produce stars among the 3- and 4-year-olds and Ready Express has been the biggest star in the crop born in 2012. The son of Ready Cash won the \$509,000 Kriteriet as a 3-year-old, the \$509,000 Swedish Derby as a 4-year-old and followed up that season with victory in \$471,000 Grand Prix de l'U.E.T. in Paris.

To win the Prix d'Amérique is something different and Nurmos was not able to find the right words after this



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A huge crowd was on hand again at Vincennes to see one of the best finishes in the 97th edition of one of the world's greatest trotting races.

victory.

Goop is getting to know the French system increasingly well and is spending time in France over the winter with several horses in his stable in Normandy. That Goop is a world class driver is well known. He was the regular driver behind Timoko and Nurmos contacted Goop last fall, just to make sure that the Swedish top reinsman could drive Readly Express in the Prix d'Amérique.

"It's completely... chaos under control right now and the horse is really good," Goop said while the champagne sprayed all over the winners at Vincennes.

Next stop in this circuit is the Prix de France on Feb. 11 contested over 1.3 miles and behind the starting gate.

Result Prix d'Amérique 2018

1. **Readly Express** – Björn Goop (Timo Nurmos) 1:54.3
2. **Bold Eagle** – Franck Nivard (Sébastien Guarato) 1:54.3
3. **Propulsion** – Örjan Kihlström (Daniel Redén) 1:54.4
4. **Belina Josselyn** – Jean-Michel Bazire 1:54.4
5. **Briac Dark** – Matthieu Abrivard (Thierry Duvaldestin) 1:55

[Prix d'Amérique replay](#)



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Famous French pageantry was, again, a big part of the show.

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