

NATHANIELHAWTHORNE GIVES TEAM VALOR FIRST WIN OVER HURDLES HANDICAPPER RAISES MARK 6.6 LBS, SO DAVID COTTIN WILL CHANGE PLAN TEAM VALOR AGREES TO NOW TRY THE COLT IN STEEPLECHASE EVENTS



Nathanielhawthorne became Team Valor's first winner over hurdles on Saturday in the Prix de Royan handicap at Compiègne. The 4-year-old started well and found a position running third for the first six of the thirteen hurdles. The David Cottin trainee then moved up to lead the field by a length. At the tenth hurdle Purple Light drew up alongside him and the pair quickened to be three lengths clear of the next horse, Aberwind, who headed the rest of the field. Purple Light stole the lead over the twelfth by 3/4 of a length but Nathanielhawthorne battled back to earn the lead back over the final fence before fending off Purple Light by a neck the entire length of the stretch and across the wire.

After the race Amanda Zetterholm, partner of trainer David Cottin, texted to report that Nathanielhawthorne came out of the race fine. The bad news is that the handicapper raised his official rating 6.6 pounds, which is a significant penalty. Zetterholm explained that rather than try to move him up into a higher-class handicap or saddle him with a heavy penalty in the same class handicap, the other option is to run him in a steeplechase race.

Seeking clarification on what this transition would mean, Team Valor's Jessica Berry consulted her friend Archie Macauley, a steeplechase jockey from Ireland, as to the details of such a transition. Macauley explained that while the colt has now broken his maiden over hurdles, he is still considered a maiden over steeplechase fences because they are likened to different disciplines. From watching the videos of Nathanielhawthorne racing and schooling, Macauley commented that the horse jumps very well and is big enough to be a good prospect for steeplechasing. Many good hurdle horses are too small to have the scope to run over the larger steeplechase fences.



While French hurdles are slightly bigger than the hurdles in the rest of Europe, fences are the largest obstacles. Despite their large appearance, Steeplechase fences are made of brush and horses can easily brush through the top of the fence. Steeplechase races include varied types of jumps, such as hedges, ditches and rails and water jumps. The most famous steeplechase in the world is the Grand National, while the most famous hurdle race is named the Champion Hurdle and takes place at the Cheltenham festival. France-Galop provides a basic overview of differences in France on their website: [Link to France-Galop's explanation page](#). Partners who have been to the races at Saratoga on a Wednesday or Thursday will have seen a hurdle race as the first race on the card on those days.

Steeplechase races are usually longer events than hurdle races, closer to three miles than two miles. There is not a huge difference in prizemoney between steeplechase and hurdle races, except for at the top level, where Steeplechase purses are much larger. Overall, steeplechase racing is considered more prestigious than running over hurdles. There are some horses which race back and forth between fences and hurdles, but it is not common.

Nathanielhawthorne will now be schooled over fences at Cottin's yard as he trains towards his first Steeplechase race. [Link here for replay](#).