

## **Big Grand Prix Classes in 2018: The Year of the Mare**

Author(s): Tim Worden, PhD

Original publication date: 2019

First appearing in: World of Show Jumping

<https://www.worldofshowjumping.com/en/Exclusives/WoSJ-Focus/Big-Grand-Prix-classes-in-2018-The-year-of-the-mare.html>

*To produce a top horse capable of winning at the highest levels of the sport, it is helpful to know the characteristics of other top horses from around the world. In this document, I describe the characteristics and competition performances of horses that placed in the top 10 of big GPs in 2018.*

Big money classes tend to attract the best horses and riders. For a horse and rider to have success in one of these competitions they must be 'on form' and prepared to compete at their best. Thus, the horse must be in a state of optimal physical, technical, psychological, and tactical preparedness for show jumping.

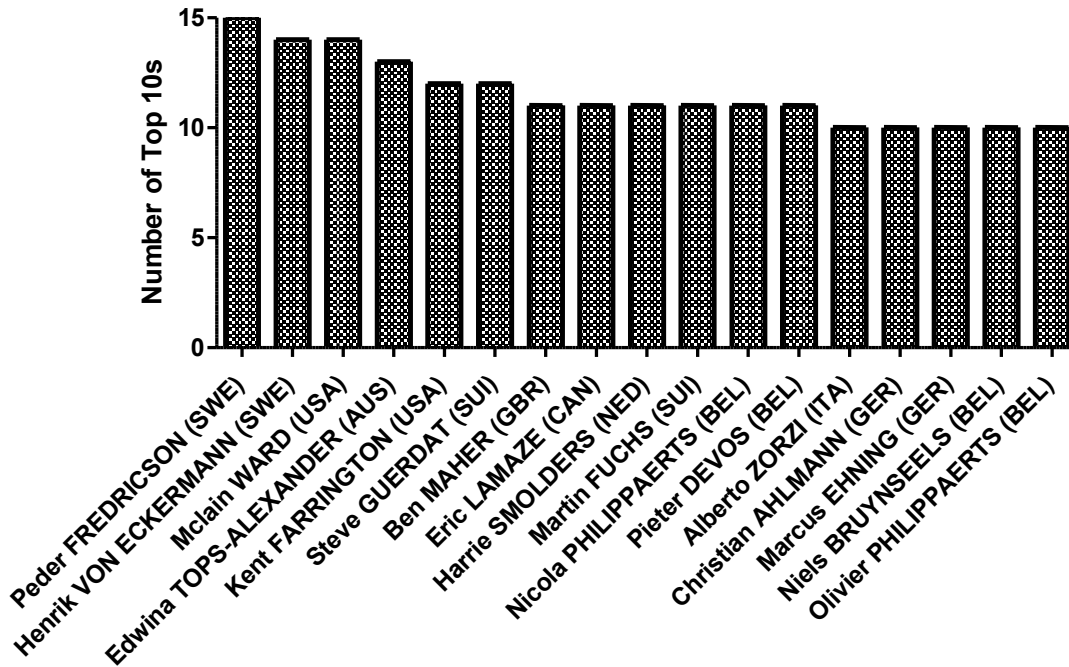
We can learn a lot about the horses that are 'on form' by examining the characteristics of those experiencing success in big GPs. In this report I examine the 84 big GPs in 2018 that offered prize money over 145,700 EUR (or 208,200 USD). For each of these classes I evaluated what the top 10 placing horses were doing in their competition schedule before the GP. This analysis offers insights into how top riders are preparing their horses for competition, and which horses are consistently reaching sports form.

*\*Note that data presented is only from FEI competitions. Thus, non-FEI classes as well as preparations at home are not factored into this analysis.*

### **Background**

In 2018, 418 different horses had at least one top 10 placing in a big money GP. In the same year, 266 different riders from 41 countries had a top 10 placing. The riders with the most top 10 placings are shown below. Peder Fredricson had the most top 10 placings in big GPs (15), followed by Henrik von Eckermann and McLain Ward with 14.

**Number of Top 10 Results in Big Money GPs**

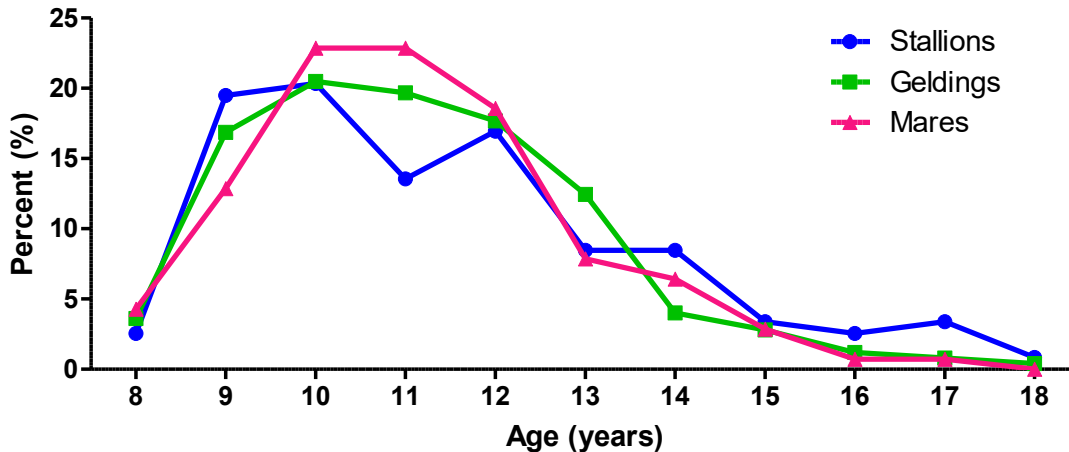


**Age & Sex**

Of the 418 horses included in the analysis, 97 were stallions, 210 were geldings, and 111 were mares. The average age for a stallion was 11.4 years, gelding was 11.3 years, and mare was 11.4 years.

To better identify at what age stallions, geldings, and mares experienced top 10 results in big GPs, the proportion of results attributed to each age are displayed below. Although there were slight variations - stallions, geldings, and mares followed a similar trajectory. The most common age for a horse placing in the top 10 of a big GP was 10 years old.

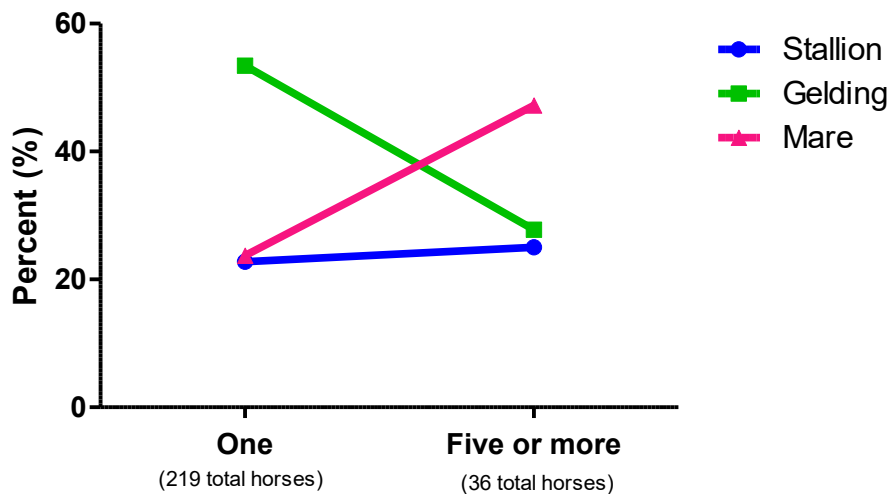
**Age at Time of Top 10 Result**



### Single versus Multiple Top 10s

It is interesting to consider the proportion of stallions, geldings, and mares that had only one top 10 result versus multiple top 10 performances. The figure below demonstrates this relationship. On the left, the sex breakdown for the 219 horses that had only one top 10 result in 2018 is shown. Geldings overwhelmingly made up the group of one result horses. Conversely, the proportion of horses that had five or more top 10 placings was dominated by mares (right side of figure). Therefore, it can clearly be seen that in 2018, mares made up a higher percentage of horses achieving multiple top 10 placings in big GPs.

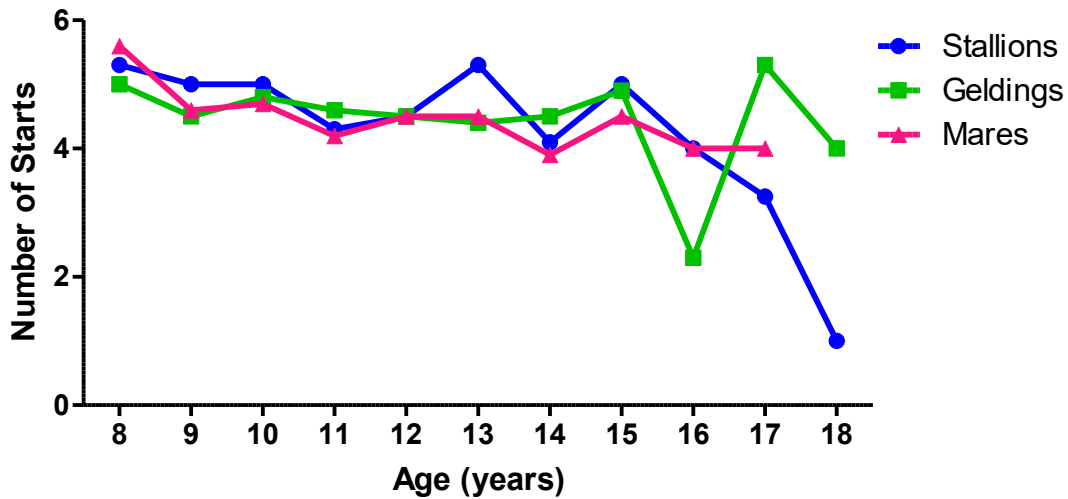
### Sex of Horses with Only One *Top 10* vs Five or More *Top 10s*



### Number of Starts Before Top 10 Result

The average number of classes in the four weeks leading up to a top 10 finish in 2018 was 4.67 ( $\pm 1.9$ ) for stallions, 4.61 ( $\pm 2.1$ ) for geldings, and 4.43 ( $\pm 1.89$ ) for mares. The figure below demonstrates a small gradual decrease in the number of FEI competitions performed before a big GP as horses become older. Note that the number of horses older than fourteen is small, so it is difficult to interpret data past this age.

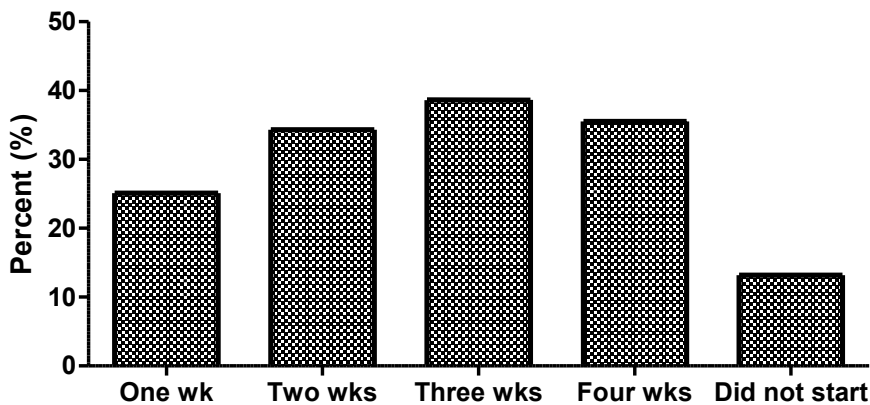
### Number of Starts in the Four Weeks Before Top 10 Result



### What Weeks do Horses Compete Before a Big GP?

It can be helpful to look at what the horses were doing in the four weeks leading up to their top 10 result. Did they compete one week before, three weeks before, or not at all? The graph below details the percentage of horses that competed on different weeks before their top 10 result. Not competing in the four weeks before a Top 10 was the least common, while competing 3 weeks before the result was most common.

### Percentage of Horses That Competed on Each Week Before Their Top 10 Result

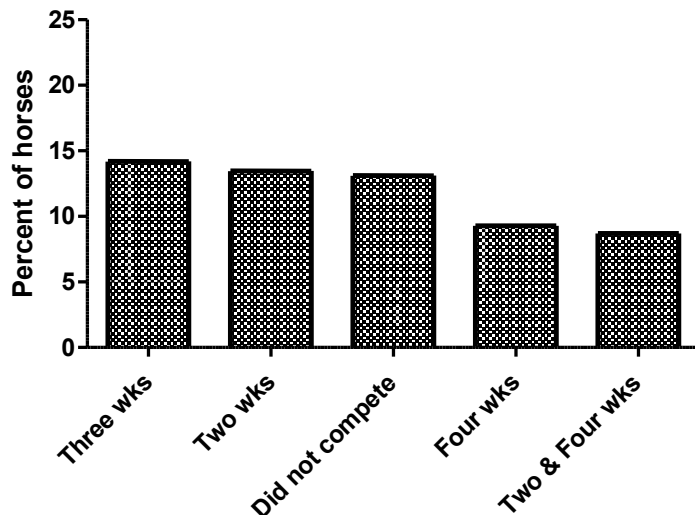


### Competition Scheduling in the Four Weeks Before a Big GP

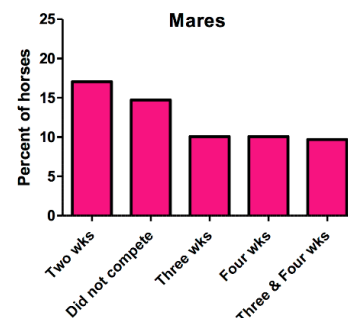
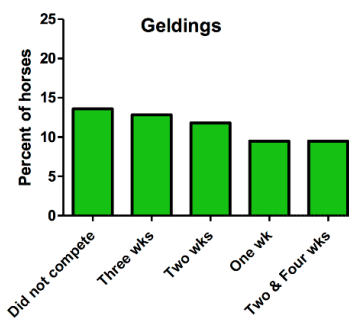
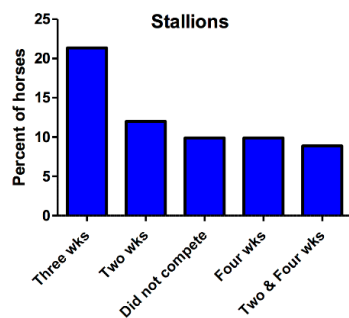
Scheduling before a big GP plays a role in ensuring horses are on form and able to jump at their best. The most common competition schedules for the four weeks leading into a top 10 performance in a big GP are shown below. Every possible combination of scheduling was observed, with some horses not competing on any week before the result, while one horse and rider achieved a top 10 placing

after competing for all four weeks before the class. Below, you can see that the most common schedule was to compete just three weeks before, followed by just two weeks before.

**The Most Popular Schedules Before a *Top 10* Result**



Importantly, the most common schedules in 2018 were quite different between stallions, geldings, and mares. For stallions, the most common schedule seen was to compete three weeks before the result. Geldings were more variable than stallions and mares, but the most common program was to not compete in the four weeks before the top 10 result. Finally, the highest proportion of mares competed two weeks before their top 10 result.

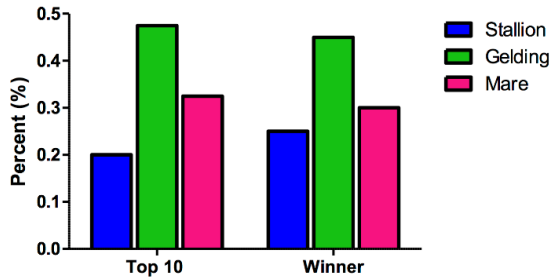


**Indoors vs Outdoors**

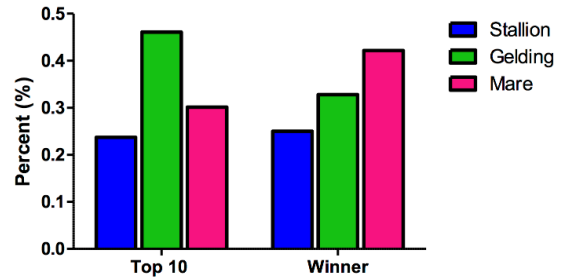
It is worthwhile to consider if stallions, geldings, or mares were better suited for competing indoors or outdoors in 2018. To examine this further, the proportion of each sex placing in the top 10, and the proportion winning the class, are graphed for both indoor competitions and outdoor competitions. On the left, it can be seen that the proportion of stallions, geldings, and mares placing in the top 10 is equivalent to those winning indoors. Conversely, for outdoor classes, although there are more geldings than stallions and mares placing in the top 10, mares won the most classes. This

observation indicates that mares were able to be faster while jumping clear to beat stallions and geldings at a higher rate outside.

**Sex Breakdown for Horses Finishing  
in the Top 10 or Winning a Big GP  
Indoors**



**Sex Breakdown for Horses Finishing  
in the Top 10 or Winning a Big GP  
Outdoors**



### Summary

In 2018, there were numerous interesting observations when examining the top 10 placings in big GPs. It seemed to be the year of the mare, with mares achieving more multiple (over five) top 10 results as compared to geldings and stallions. Mares also excelled in big GPs outdoors, winning the most of any sex. The data also show that certain competition schedules were more common for producing a top 10 result, and that stallions, geldings, and mares utilized different schedules.