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First and second for Jaeger-LeCoultre watches at timing competition.

A Jaeger-LeCoultre Master Tourbillon Calibre 978 wristwatch has won the first timing competition in more than 35 years, gaining 909 points out of a perfect timing score of 1,000. It was closely followed in second place by a Jaeger-LeCoultre Reverso Gyrotourbillon with 908 points.

The result certifies the Master Tourbillon as the most precise mechanical wristwatch made today.

The Chronometrie 2009 international timing competition for mechanical wristwatches was held to mark the 50th anniversary of the watch museum in Le Locle. This watchmaking town in Canton Neuchâtel, Switzerland, was known in the pre-quartz-watch era for its chronometers. It was the first timing competition since the Neuchâtel observatory held the last trial in 1972.

A total of 16 watches entered the competition and six were eliminated during the 45 days of timing trials held at Switzerland's chronometer-testing institute, COSC, in Biel and at the Besançon observatory in neighbouring France.

The results of the competition, kept secret since it ended in October, were announced at a ceremony at the museum on December 3, 2009. The prize for the best performing watch submitted by an independent watchmaker was awarded to Mr René Addor, whose watch gained 795 points, coming seventh overall.

Unlike the previous competitions held at observatories from the late 19th century to 1972, Chronometrie 2009 included reliability tests in which the watches were subjected to the shocks and magnetic fields of daily wear.

The timing trials, according to the ISO 3159 international chronometer norms, were divided into three 15-day sessions, starting in Besançon, then at COSC and once more at COSC after the shock and magnetism tests. The watches were tested cased-up; the usual COSC chronometer certification tests only the basic movement.

The revival of competitive timing also brings back the craft of the *régleur*, or precision timer who prepares watches for the contest. The art consists of juggling conflicting parameters to achieve the truest time and the most constant rate in different positions and temperatures. The two Jaeger-LeCoultre watches were adjusted by a team led by the firm's technical director, Mr Jean-Claude Meylan.



The timing results of the competition show that the Master Tourbillon gained on average 0.13 seconds a day, or less than 47.5 seconds a year, and its rate did not vary more than 0.28 seconds a day. The multi-axis Gyrotourbillon movement with a helical mainspring showed remarkable constancy of rate between vertical and horizontal positions, with an average daily variation of 0.29 seconds in the three stages of the trial.

Jaeger-LeCoultre, which produces in-house the entire range of parts required to build watch movements as well as most exterior components, has kept alive precision timing skills with the 1000 Hours Control introduced in 1992, which tests the timekeeping performance and reliability of its watches in conditions of daily wear.

In 2009, reaffirming its pioneering role and leadership status among fine watch manufacturers, Jaeger-LeCoultre developed a new label of quality and accuracy, the 1000 Hours Chrono, which applies the ISO 3159 chronometer norms and focuses on precision timekeeping. This new label was specially created for the Master Grande Tradition watch with its silicon escapement and is entirely in line with the brand's ongoing commitment to certified quality. In keeping with its avant-garde traditions, these two Jaeger-LeCoultre labels represent a major innovation by testing the accuracy of finished watches and not just of the movements alone without their complications.

“Since it was founded in 1833, the Jaeger-LeCoultre watch manufacturing company has been distinguished by the technical and aesthetic excellence of its timepieces,” notes the firm's CEO, Mr Jérôme Lambert. “The long process of innovation centred on precision and invention could only have been achieved by bringing together new skills and technologies under the same roof. This has made Jaeger-LeCoultre the reference as a complete and totally integrated watch manufacturer.”

The Chronometrie 2009 competition reflects a renewal of interest in mechanical precision, and has successfully adapted the traditional 45-day observatory trial to modern testing methods and the requirements of today's wristwatch owners. A second competition is scheduled for 2011.

The competition jury was chaired by Professor Michel Mayor, discoverer of extra-solar planets and astrophysician at the Geneva Observatory where the first chronometer testing process was developed in 1879. An honorary committee, headed by Swiss astronaut, Professor Claude Nicolier of the federal technical school in Lausanne (EPFL), ensured the integrity of the result. Mr Claude-Henri Chabloz of the Le Locle museum presided over the organising committee, which included representatives of the Swiss Society for Chronometry, COSC, the Besançon observatory and the ARC technical high school in Le Locle.



Manufacture Jaeger-LeCoultre

Born of an invention, the Grande Maison has always been driven by the spirit of discovery; the need to create new, ever more accurate and more complex technical marvels. Year after year, knowledge and skills have been enriched, renewed and multiplied to serve the unique purpose of mastering the countless operations involved in manufacturing watch movements and cases – the fundamental prerequisite for rising to the most daunting technical challenges.

A major player in watchmaking history, Jaeger-LeCoultre has now celebrated its 175th anniversary. The Manufacture has an impressive range of world firsts, superlative creations and legendary models to its credit, including the Reverso, the Duoplan, the Master Control, the Memovox Polaris, the Gyrotourbillon I and the Atmos. In 2009, around 1000 people proficient in over 40 watchmaking professions and more than 20 cutting-edge technologies continue to pay tribute to the pioneering ardour of the company founders by creating new masterpieces proudly perpetuating the grand horological tradition.

In 2010, as a further extension to the capacious premises now surrounding Antoine LeCoultre's original atelier, Jaeger-LeCoultre will be inaugurating a new building providing 9,000m² of additional workshop space.