**Magnier Family, O’Brien Receive 2018 Longines and IFHA International Award of Merit**

**Dublin (Ireland) / Saint-Imier (Switzerland), 14 August 2018 – The 2018 Longines and IFHA International Award of Merit was given to the Magnier family and trainer Aidan O’Brien, the driving forces behind Coolmore and the Ballydoyle Racing Stable, in Dublin today. The ceremony was held at an event coinciding with the launch of the 2018 Longines Irish Champions Weekend, which will take place at Leopardstown Racecourse on Saturday 15th September and the Curragh Racecourse on Sunday 16th September. Since its creation, the award honours distinguished personalities for their lifelong contributions to the world of horse racing.**

As the Official Partner and Official Watch of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA), the Swiss watchmaker Longines was proud to present the 2018 Longines and IFHA International Award of Merit to the Magnier family and Aidan O’Brien. Previous recipients of this honour include Jim Bolger, leading Irish trainer, owner and breeder; France’s Alec Head, past champion trainer and patriarch of prominent stud farm Haras du Quesnay; Seth Hancock of historic Claiborne Farm in America; the late Marcel Zarour Atanacio, former chairman of the South American Organization for the Promotion of Thoroughbreds (OSAF); the Romanet Family, long renowned leaders in both the French and international world of horseracing; and Yutaka Take, legendary Japanese jockey.

The International Award of Merit was created by Longines and the IFHA in order to honour public figures for their outstanding contribution to the world of horse racing. As Official Partner and Official Watch of the IFHA, Longines additionally awards several other prizes in recognition of excellence in this discipline in collaboration with the IFHA. The winners are honoured throughout the year in ceremonies attended by representatives from across the entire profession.

At the International Award of Merit ceremony, Juan-Carlos Capelli, Vice President of Longines and Head of International Marketing, stated: “Today, we rewarded the lifetime dedication to horseracing of an illustrious family and a trainer, the Magnier Family and Aidan O’Brien. Our brand, and myself personally, have had the pleasure to witness a great number of their exceptional performances and to reward them very often with Longines timepieces. It is an honour to host this ceremony in a country where horse is king and where the horseracing industry has such an important impact on its economy, culture and history.”

Louis Romanet, IFHA Chairman, commented: “The Magnier family and trainer Aidan O’Brien have built a stunningly powerful partnership on a truly global scale. The success of the Coolmore and Ballydoyle team is so ubiquitous in both Ireland and abroad that it would be impossible to list all of their accomplishments here today. It has been a privilege to have both the Magnier and O’Brien families here as we celebrate their contributions to horse racing.”

**About the Magnier Family and Aidan O’Brien, laureates of the 2018 Longines & IFHA International Award of Merit**

Coolmore is a name synonymous with global success at the highest level, both as a breeding and racing entity. The world-renowned operation came together when John Magnier joined forces with Ballydoyle trainer Vincent O’Brien and business magnate Robert Sangster in the 1970s. The partnership’s first major winner was The Minstrel in the 1977 Epsom Derby, and its first major homebred was Sadler’s Wells. A top-class racehorse, upon his retirement Sadler’s Wells rewrote the stud books by becoming the 14-time leading sire in Great Britain and Ireland.

Magnier is married to Vincent O’Brien’s daughter Susan, and they have five children—Tom, Kate, JP, MV and Sammy Jo. He acquired both Ballydoyle and Coolmore after O’Brien’s retirement and Sangster’s death.

Aidan O’Brien (no relation to Vincent) became the trainer at Ballydoyle in 1996. O’Brien took out his trainer’s license in 1993 and got his start with National Hunt horses, most notably the legendary Istabraq, a son of Sadler’s Wells.

Another son of Sadler’s Wells, Coolmore’s Galileo, would give O’Brien his first of six Epsom Derby winners and go on to become one of the premier stallions in history. In 2016, European Horse of the Year Minding, a daughter of Galileo, gave O'Brien his 250th Group/Grade 1 winner on the Flat when taking the Qipco 1,000 Guineas at Newmarket. In 2017, Highland Reel, a son of Galileo, gave O’Brien his 300th Group/Grade 1 winner (Flat and National Hunt combined) by winning the Prince of Wales's Stakes at Royal Ascot, which was timed by Longines.

In 2017, with 28 Group/Grade 1 victories, O’Brien broke the world record for Group/Grade 1 wins in a calendar year by a trainer, besting Bobby Frankel's mark of 25 set in 2003. He has been crowned champion Irish Flat trainer in terms of prize-money won every season since 1999 and has won Group/Grade 1 races across the globe, including in Australia, Canada, France, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. The majority of O’Brien’s big-race winners have carried the colours of the Coolmore partners to victory.

 **About the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA):**

The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) is the world peak body for the international sport of Thoroughbred racing. Its members are the national racing authorities across the globe which stage Thoroughbred races.

Major areas of the IFHA’s activities include:

• Making and amending the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering (the IABRW)

• Policy development relating to welfare and safety of horses and riders

• International Race Planning and Grading (“black type”)

• World Rankings

• Equine Prohibited Substances and Practices

• Harmonization of Race Day Rules

• Fostering commercial development of the racing industry globally

The IFHA is a foundation member with Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) of the International Horse Sports Confederation and is affiliated to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

**About Longines**

Longines has been based at Saint-Imier in Switzerland since 1832. Its watchmaking expertise reflects a strong devotion to tradition, elegance and performance. Longines has built solid and lasting ties with the world of sport over the years, with a wealth of experience as timekeeper for sports championships around the globe and a partner of numerous international sports federations. Renowned for the elegance of its timepieces, Longines is a member of Swatch Group Ltd., the world's leading watch manufacturer. Known by its winged hourglass logo, the brand is today present in over 150 different countries.

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