



Edited by
Pippa Roome
DO YOU HAVE AN EVENTING STORY?
Email: pippa.roome@timeinc.com

Lambert's Balana. They rose from 25th to eventual fourth.

"She's really special but actually ran off with me at Bramham; she's settled now," said Nicola, attributing the change to a Kineton noseband coupled with a Waterford bit. "Now I can balance her and let her nose out."

The USA's Hannah Sue Burnett looked classy on her seasoned Harbour Pilot: "He has one speed and it's fast."

After a trip to Burghley two years ago ended in Sunday morning withdrawal when lying seventh, Hannah decided this year that she would "back off a bit and come to Blenheim and try to win it – not that this is backing off much!"

Third after cross-country, the showjumping scuppered their hopes, two down dropping them to fifth.

"He was a bit aggressive today," she said afterwards. "He gets a bit nervous and he doesn't always jump well off grass. He obviously worked hard yesterday. But he's still the best horse in the world."

With 52% clear rounds, no horse falls, no withdrawals despite the weather and problems spread very evenly around the course, departing course-designer Eric Winter was justifiably pleased: "It's my last track here, I think my best, and I couldn't have wished for it to have gone any better." He now takes up the same role at Badminton while CIC designer Mark Evans takes over here.

"It's nice to see people keep going after they have had 20 penalties...that they think there's enough education in



Great deals on print and iPad subscriptions at www.horseandhoundsubs.co.uk/subs



doing so," continued Eric.

Some did struggle in the conditions. Californian Tamra Smith on Twizzled Syster pulled up mid-course, unable to keep control with wet reins. Poor Aoife Clarke somehow ended up on the floor after the last fence on the talented Wasting Light.

Harry Meade had been concerned about how the one-eyed Orlando, formerly the ride of Izzy Taylor, would handle Blenheim's hills, but the owners were keen for him to run here.

Though lying second after dressage, the horse never travelled cross-country and Harry wisely pulled up: "He was hating it."

Ibby Macpherson, lying fourth after a smart test on Ballington Diamond, was livid to have a refusal at the second corner of the Elite Horse Owners Cord Wood Steaks. She retired after giving her horse a thorough telling-off, for which she was given a yellow card.



Newton's biggest win
TWO former seven-year-old champions (at Osborne and Le Lion) topped the prestigious CIC3* class for eight- and nine-year-olds. Willa Newton, 26, supported by hordes of old school friends, scored her biggest win yet on Caja 20.

Second, and the only combination to finish on their dressage score, was Laura Collett on Mr Bass, her 2015 world seven-year-old champion in Le Lion.

Caja 20, a Hanoverian chestnut mare, was found by eventer Dirk Schrade, with whom Willa trained after university. The German connections continue as she now trains with Chris Bartle and Bettina Hoy.

"She's very sharp and I've had a few nervous moments in the warm-up, but she's totally focused when you start," said Willa, her phone pinging

WORKING RIDER

Simon Vatcher

FULL-TIME farrier Simon (pictured) logged his second Blenheim CCI completion with his wife's Camblin Hill – and won the farriery prize for the second year running.

Simon's wife Victoria runs a livery yard and is a joint master of the Berkeley, for whom Simon sometimes field masters. He competes just one horse and in some eight events annually.

"My wife does the fitness work while I'm shoeing until seven or eight at night, and I might only ride once a week," explains Simon. "It's my hobby, and my dressage is getting better though I don't really know what I'm doing. My dream would be to get to Badminton, but my wife says if I manage that then I have to give up."

Second, and the only combination to finish on their dressage score, was Laura Collett on Mr Bass, her 2015 world seven-year-old champion in Le Lion.

Caja 20, a Hanoverian chestnut mare, was found by eventer Dirk Schrade, with whom Willa trained after university. The German connections continue as she now trains with Chris Bartle and Bettina Hoy.

"She's very sharp and I've had a few nervous moments in the warm-up, but she's totally focused when you start," said Willa, her phone pinging



landing a hat-trick – she has won this class for the past two years – leading after dressage on the pretty Ascona M.

"I really brought her here with next year in mind," said Jonelle after dressage, "but I'll have a cut at it."

Despite a clear, three-showjumping-time-faults put her just one penalty behind Tom McEwen overnight, with Willa lying third.

Tom sounded confident about his Bramham under-25 champion Toledo De Kerser's

chances after an immaculate showjumping round.

CIC cross-country day dawned as bright as it had been beastly the day before; the going was excellent. Tom's lead was to be short-lived, with a silly run-out at the brush corner after the lake. Speed proved pivotal, with only three making the time – Laura, Andrew Nicholson and Oliver Townend with Cooley SRS (fifth).

To many time-faults dropped Jonelle to 10th, while Willa rode foot to the floor –

"she felt so confident" – and Mr Bass made it look easy.

"The more you throw at him, the better he goes," said Laura. Having taken the horse to contest indoor eventing grand prix around Europe, Laura says "he goes in any atmosphere; he's always been my fun horse".

Andrew Nicholson's Swallow Springs, third, came from breeder Donal Barnwell as a "naughty but talented" horse.

"He is classy but you do have to pay attention," said Andrew, having described the diverse ways the horse found to dump him in his youth.

Australia's Emma Dougall, who is based in the UK with her partner Kevin McNab, was fourth with Fernhill Tabasco.

Townend is the master! If the final leg of the new Event Rider Masters (ERM) did not deliver the complete fairytale ending – a third successive win for Oliver Townend on



Lydia Hannon and My Royal Touch achieve a personal best with third in the CC3*

Cillnabracken Evo – it was not far off. Oliver was pipped by France's Thomas Carlile on the gorgeous stallion Upsilon, but clinched £30,000 for topping the series. In total he's scooped £74,000 of the £350,000 2016 ERM prize fund.

Oliver has form in rich new classes – he scooped the more controversial Express Eventing in 2008. Unlike that, the ERM leaves the sport's character intact while jazzing it up for TV; it will run again next year.

"Nothing ever goes exactly to plan but to finish with drama up to the last rider is fantastic," said ERM's Chris Stone.

Oliver acknowledges Sally-Anne Eggington's horse – from whom former rider Andrew Nicholson fell when he broke his neck last year – is "quirky" but excels in these events.

"He has been fantastic in his last three runs and this series has been the biggest step forward," Oliver said.



Olympic reserve horse Billy The Red finishes sixth in the CIC3* with Tina Cook

Despite torrential rain through the dressage, the classy field produced some smart tests with five marks covering the top 14. In an innovative development, spectators were invited to judge tests (for fun) alongside the judges via an app (news, 8 September).

Holding ground in the main arena put showjumping clears

at a premium, and 18 faults ruled out dressage leader Astier Nicolas with Molakal.

But series leader Paul Tapner, as well as Gemma Tattersall, Jonelle Price and Oliver, still had hopes of claiming the title.

Despite riding one of only

two rounds inside the time, Paul

could do no better than eighth with Yogi Bear V III, while fast rounds left Jonelle (The Marley and Me Syndicate's Cloud Dancer II, last year's CIC winner) and Nicola Wilson (Gerry and Mary Kemp and Janine Shewman's One Two Many) third and fourth.

Upsilon, who is registered as

an Anglo Arab but has Holstein bloodlines, was a majestic

winner, at only eight.

"What a horse," said Thomas,

who was born in Toulouse to English parents. "He dislikes touching brush but is getting used to it now. His only weakness is his colour – he gets filthy!"

Thomas hopes to contest

ERM's with him again next year

"to let him compete against top horses but over a shorter distance". Many of us will miss the Formula One-style podium celebrations, and excellent, free live-streaming service over the winter. Roll on next year. **THH**

RESULTS

CIC3* – 1. Seigneur Medocell (B) Hoy | 2. Tessa (A) Nicholson | 3. Royal Touch (L) Hannond GBR | 4. 3.25.5/3.5.5. ERM (S) Tapner | 5. Cloud Dancer II (C) Tattersall | 6. 41.7 (2.4-4.4-3.2. Cloud Dancer II (J) Price | 7. 45.7 (0.8-4.6-5.3. Cloud Dancer II (L) Price) NZL | 8. 41.7 (0.4-4.4-3.2. Cloud Dancer II (P) Wilson | 9. 38.4 (2.1-4.4-2.2. Mr Bass II, Celento GBR | 10. 42.4 (0.0-4.2-3.2. Swallow Springs (A) Nicholson) | 11. 41.8 (0.4-4.5.8. **NEXT WEEK: Mark Phillips**

COMMENT

Mark Todd

Time for change

We are so lucky in eventing to compete at such fantastic venues – two weeks ago, we were at one amazing estate, Burghley, then last week we were at another, Blenheim.

Blenheim produced three really good competitions and all the cross-country tracks rode well. Oliver Townend was a worthy inaugural Event Rider Masters (ERM) overall winner and the series has panned out successfully – different nations had victories and every leg was exciting right to the finish. Even the overall title came down to the last few riders at Blenheim.

Eventing is the livelihood of the top riders and judging can mean the difference between winning and losing.

Discrepancies can be worth more than a showjumping pole. In a professional sport, it needs a fair and level playing field.

In pre-dressage, the judges supervisory panel can alter

obviously wrong marks. It's time we looked at using this in this competition. May the ground jury concept is outdated – should we employ dressage judges and then put the other phases into suitable hands, rather than the same three people overseeing the whole competition? Most event riders now pure dressage trainers, so perhaps pure dressage judges are appropriate.

Ultimately, it shouldn't be up to riders and owners to question this. Our governing body, the FEI, should be more proactive and ensure these discrepancies don't happen frequently.

The elimination of Rodolphe Scherer in the Burghley dressage also left spectators confused. Makara De Montigny had passed the trot-up and as professional riders, we don't take lame horses to events. Some horses are a bit stiff and can kick lame or uneven in the lateral work.

It's a dangerous situation if ground juries start eliminating horses in the arena except in exceptional circumstances – even in consultation with a vet, as happened here.

This highlights what we saw watching on Friday afternoon; it was amazing to witness the wave of excitement that came over all the judges. No disrespect to those riders, but the scores just kept going up and obvious mistakes garnered puzzling good marks.

This sort of thing isn't limited to one event or one ground jury. The ERM judging at Blenheim was odd. Jonelle Price's Cloud Dancer II, a real dressage horse, gained a similar

comment, 8 September) – and it didn't look good to viewers. I would prefer to see the more common procedure where a horse is allowed to finish the test and then re-examined by the vet. **THH**



mark to some average tests. This was safe judging, without using the range of marks.

For as long as I've been riding we've had this discussion and nothing has changed. You can't escape the human element in judging. There will always be differences, but there has to be some sort of control.

Eventing is the livelihood of the top riders and judging can mean the difference between winning and losing. Discrepancies can be worth more than a showjumping pole. In a professional sport, it needs a fair and level playing field.

In pre-dressage, the judges supervisory panel can alter obviously wrong marks. It's time we looked at using this in this competition. May the ground jury concept is outdated – should we employ dressage judges and then put the other phases into suitable hands, rather than the same three people overseeing the whole competition? Most event riders now pure dressage trainers, so perhaps pure dressage judges are appropriate.

Ultimately, it shouldn't be up to riders and owners to question this. Our governing body, the FEI, should be more proactive and ensure these discrepancies don't happen frequently.

The elimination of Rodolphe Scherer in the Burghley dressage also left spectators confused. Makara De Montigny had passed the trot-up and as professional riders, we don't take lame horses to events. Some horses are a bit stiff and can kick lame or uneven in the lateral work.

It's a dangerous situation if ground juries start eliminating horses in the arena except in exceptional circumstances – even in consultation with a vet, as happened here.

This highlights what we saw watching on Friday afternoon; it was amazing to witness the wave of excitement that came over all the judges. No respect to those riders, but the scores just kept going up and obvious mistakes garnered puzzling good marks.

This sort of thing isn't limited to one event or one ground jury. The ERM judging at Blenheim was odd. Jonelle Price's Cloud Dancer II, a real dressage horse, gained a similar

comment, 8 September) – and it didn't look good to viewers. I would prefer to see the more common procedure where a horse is allowed to finish the test and then re-examined by the vet. **THH**