



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.

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

For as long as I've been riding 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, we need a fair and level playing field.

In pure dressage, the judges supervisory panel can alter obviously wrong marks. It's time we looked at using this in eventing. Maybe by the ground jury concept is outdated – should we employ dressage judges and then put the other phases into suitable hands, rather than the same three people overseeing the whole competition?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 use 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 Scherrer in the Burghley dressage also left spectators confused. Makara De Montjege 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 look brittle lame or unlevel in the lateral work.

It's a dangerous situation if ground jurors start eliminating horses in the arena except in exceptional circumstances – even in consultation with a vet, as happened here (comment, 8 September) – and it doesn'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. **H&H** ● **NEXT WEEK:** Mark Phillips



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

TALKING POINTS

Cable drama
JESSICA MOORE was brought down on the flat after the CIC3* third fence when Ask The Boss got a cable caught between his foot and his shoe. Thus her Blenheim ended – along with the CIC five feed.

Early birds
To accommodate the ERM alongside two other huge classes, Saturday's cross-country started unusually early at 9am and was complete by 2pm – catching some visitors unawares.

Fold-up factsheets
THE traditional ES programme was replaced by fold-up factsheets (E) in advance, E2 on the day) showing the course map, running order, results and more, printed daily. Visitor reaction was positive.

Crakes or flakes?
VERBAL slip of the weekend? Probably commentator Spencer Sturmy calling Beanie Sturjig's The Corn Flake "The Corn Flake". But as he later let Zara Tindall shave his hair off in aid of Wilberly Wonder Pony, we'll let him off.

RESULTS

CIC3* - 1. Seligmer Medcott (GB) GER 32.0, 8.4, 40.4; 2. Tesse (A) NICHOLSON NZL 48.5, 0.4, 45.2; 3. My Royal Touch (B) HANNON GBR 45.3, 3.2, 53.5; ERM CIC3* - 1. Upsilon (C) CARLIER FRA 41.7, 0.2, 44.6; 2. Cinnabradon Evo (D) TOWNEND GBR 43.7, 0.0, 46.6; 3. Cloud Dancer II (J) PRICE NZL 41.7, 0.0, 44.7; CIC3P* - 1. Caja 20 (W) NEWTON GBR 38.4, 0.0, 34.0; 2. Mr Bass (L) COLLETT GBR 42.4, 0.0, 42.4; 3. Swallow Springs (A) NICHOLSON 41.8, 4.0, 45.8.



Showjumping: CIC3* second Andrew Nicholson and the 'unbelievably fast' Tesse



Lydia Hannon and My Royal Touch achieve a personal best with third in the CIC3*

"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's always been my fun horse". Andrew Nicholson's Swallow Springs, third, came from breeder Donal Barnwell as a "horse 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 Dougal, 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 fairy tale ending – a third successive win for Oliver Townend on

EVENTING



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 riding one of only two rounds inside the time, Paul could do no better than eighth with Yogi Bear VIII, 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 Shewan'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 ERMs 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. **11A.11**

BLenheim PALACE

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Oliver Townend (Cinnabradon Evo) narrowly fails to seal a CIC3* ERM hat-trick, finishing second but securing the inaugural series title

going so," continued Eric. Some did struggle in the conditions. Californian Tamra Smith on Twizled 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 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 David 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

Newton's biggest win TWO former seven-year-old champions (at Osberton 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 Bartie 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 ping



He has one speed – fast! Hannah Sue Burnett's Harbour Pilot, CIC3* fifth

non-stop with congratulatory messages. Her celebrations did not end here; she also came eighth in the CCI.

It had initially seemed that Jonelle Price might succeed in



Laura Collett and eight-year-old Mr Bass, second in the CIC3* on a clean sheet

WORKING RIDER

Simon Vatcher

FULL-TIME farrier Simon (pictured) logged his second Blenheim CCI completion with his wife's Cambin 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 fields masters. He competes just one horse and in some eight events annually.

"My wife does the fitness work while I'm out shoeing until seven or eight at night, and I might only ride once a week," explains Simon. "It's my hobby, and my wife 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."



Simon Vatcher and his wife Victoria on Cambin Hill.

It had initially seemed that Jonelle Price might succeed in



The Boss, Carlie and the unbeatable Yogi Bear VIII, finished fourth in the ERM CIC3*