

Talented Boy secures champion's crown for Kelly

GRASSROOTS CHAMPS

By Aimi Clark

TALENTED Boy lived up to his name at the Mitsubishi Motors Grassroots Festival. Just days after carrying mother-of-one Kelly Turner to victory at the Winter Dressage Championships, the 11-year-old gelding added their names to another roll of honour, this time claiming the BE100 championship title.

The victorious duo, who have been together for seven years, earned the best marks from the dressage judges before pulling off a double clear.

"I was worried that nerves would get to me, particularly in the show jumping, but in fact this is the first time that I've been cool and calm," smiled London-based Kelly. "I think being at [the dressage championships] last week really helped."

Kelly, 29, who trains with Gill Watson, Nicola McGivern and Nick Turner, admits to being superstitious.

"I've got some very old lucky socks with holes in the heels and an old cross-country top that has seen better days. I dared not change them before but I might consider it now."

Time was of the essence around James Willis' 20-fence cross-country track but not because the 6min 4sec optimum was hard to get. The fast going saw 10 of 49 starters cross the finish line with multiple penalties for going too fast.

"I'm not the best at finding a rhythm so today I just let Talented Boy get on with it. I thought we might not be quick enough but he came home flying," added Kelly.

A solid performance from The Witham Widget secured the runner-up spot for Kathy Emery.

"This is a very special moment," said the 46-year-old who has campaigned the 10-year-old mare for five years and is a freelance riding instructor. "We were here for the



BE100 champions Kelly Turner and Talented Boy have been together for seven years



Part-time nurse Alexandra Ferrar-Fry and Diamond Trefoil take the spoils in the BE90 class

BE90 championship last year [and finished 28th] but my horse couldn't cope with the bigger arena so I mimicked it at home and that practice has paid off."

A level student

Lucyanna Westaway filled third aboard Raindance III.

"We should have been here last year but she suffered a stress fracture 10 days before and I had to pull out," said the Hurstwood

College pupil. "This more than makes up for that, though."

Diamond grabs the spoils

West Yorkshire's Alexandra Farrar-Fry confessed herself surprised – "but in a good way" – to be the clear winner of the BE90 championship. Her six-year-old mare Diamond Trefoil was the only mount to finish on his leading first-phase mark of 26.

"Last year was his first season eventing so I was chuffed to qualify but I didn't come with any expectations," said the 20-year-old part-time nurse who is studying for her BHS teaching qualifications. "I felt the pressure of being in the lead – trying to stay there was a difficult test."

The consensus among riders was that the cross-country track was "a decent championship test" and several fences caused concern for this particular jockey.

"Because Diamond hasn't got much mileage he was babyish in places," added Alexandra, who contested working hunter classes before taking up eventing in 2007. "He used to have a water phobia but we're over that now."

Frances Davies, 52, who juggles a demanding corporate finance career in London with eventing, finished 4.5 penalties out of the reckoning for second aboard Dark Pretender. The busy mother of six relies on the help of Sally Rowe to assist with her horses at home in Kent.

"I'm used to being busy and I hate sitting still. I think I'm a quirk of nature because I respond to pressure well, too, but the horse helps – he really is delightful," said Frances, who took up eventing five years ago and who groomed for Lucinda Green during a gap year. "As we came out of the prize giving she was saying well done to everyone. That was surreal."

Caroline Bridge, 48, a housewife and mother-of-one, piloted Leonidas 103 into third.

"For someone like me to be able to ride here is pretty good," smiled the Suffolk-based jockey who finished 17th in last year's BE100 championship. "Being here then inspired me to keep going. This is a young horse who's come on well and I feel lucky to be back for a second time."

The final statistics made for easy reading with three BE100 combinations failing to complete and only a handful of faults being accrued by those who did. It was a similar story in the BE90, with two horses eliminated and a smattering of jumping penalties at the bottom end of the leader board. This meant that good first-phase marks were crucial for a high placing and time penalties proved costly.



Frances Davies, who works in corporate finance, finishes second in the BE90 championship with Dark Pretender

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