

\* \* \* \* \*

## INTER COUNTY TEAM CHALLENGE

\* \* \* \* \*

### 12 June 2011 – Norton Heath was THE place to be!

WOW! What a great day! Unfortunately I can't start by saying that the sun shone all day, because, in fact, it rained and the wind blew and it was pretty damn cold too!! But none of that did anything to dampen the spirits of the 21 teams who came from every corner of the Eastern Region to contest our inaugural Inter County Challenge. The excitement has been building for weeks, with viewing days, test riding, long list days, DVD evenings and social events. It all culminated in this weekend and started on Saturday evening at Norton Heath with various counties gathering to party! There were fun and games in the field for Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, whilst in the bar Norfolk appeared with a fantastic Norfolk cake, complete with fireworks on the top! Apart from nearly burning down the bar - it was a great success! Suffolk took over the far end of the room, and Essex, predictably loitered at the bar!! Tactics were discussed, large drinks generously brought for the opposition (!) - and team colours much in evidence. Beds were the Silver Ladies (+ Eddie) with silver almost everything you could think of! The Suffolk team were decked out in their pale yellow polo shirts, and Norfolk had very stylist purple jackets. Essex were sporting their lovely hot pink tops, and there was even hair, eye shadow and socks being worn patriotically for the relevant counties. It created a wonderful buzz for the night before the competition, and made the whole experience of being on a team and riding with other people even more fun.

Sunday dawned, and soon tests were underway in all three arenas. Team trainers - Dan Sherriff, Mark Ruddock, Paul Hayler, Pippa Childerhouse and Natalie Banks had very busy days, warming up their riders, watching tests, cheering and commiserating and getting slowly damper! The first round commenced with Prelim, Elementary and Advanced Medium tests, and as they progressed, there was a buzz around the scoreboard as scores started to come out, and people began to work out which teams the big scorers were in! As we moved on towards lunchtime, first rounds in Para, Novice and Medium tests were also being completed, and scores at the end of this round were quickly added up. At the half way stage, the **Herts Gade** team were the clear leaders, and all within a point of each other and snapping at their heels were **Herts Chess**, **Norfolk Elise**, **Essex Burberry** and **Prada** and **London Dorchester** teams. In the car park the Norfolk flag was still flying, and Philip Potts was doing sterling work on the microphone, giving details of all the riders as they came in, plugging our fabulous sponsors, and keeping us up to date with play (or rather lack of it) at Queens!

Into the second rounds, where many riders upped their game again, and the scoreboard was constantly changing, and so it was down to the last rider up the centre line. Then, after some frantic tapping into the excel spreadsheet, there was a mad rush in the by now

torrential rain, to the indoor school for the prize giving. Everyone gathered in their competition kit in their teams and it was a wonderful spectacle to see all the riders gathered at the end of a successful day, still smiling and still enjoying themselves. Prize giving started with the Individual Awards - and champions in their classes were: **Imogen Ablett** (Prelim) who won a fab Joules chair that I really covet, as well as a sash, rosette and bottle of bubbly (for Mum)!! Novice Champ was **Giselle Hyland** riding for Essex. The Elementary title was taken by **Amy Nash** for the Bedfordshire team, and the combined Medium/Advanced Medium/Para class was won by **Debbie Ridout** from Norfolk - so well done to all of them.

Presents were then given to all the County Co-ordinators, each one of whom received a big cheer from their riders, and deservedly so, without them we could not have pulled the whole thing together - so thank you VERY much to **Natalie Banks, Natalie Payne, Kim Ratcliffe, Debbie Tate, Michele Wyatt, Charlotte Holes** and **Amanda Edwards** - you are all fabulous!

The Trakehner Society kindly donated rosettes and prizes for the highest placed riders on Trakehner horses, and the top three were: 1<sup>st</sup> **Bev Dixon** and **Kape Kennedy**, 2<sup>nd</sup> **Vicki Scott** and **Cheyne Khloe Klassiche**, 3<sup>rd</sup> **Carolyn Davis** and **Obvious**.

Then it was on to the main event - the Team results! Going in reverse order, we were quickly into the top four. In 4th spot was the **London Dorchester** Team on 408.81 (**Athene Carr, Claire Knowles, Samantha** and **Adam Smyth**), 3rd went to **Essex Prada** (**Anna Cosey, Giselle Hyland, Maria Dunne** and **Rachel Maddocks**), 2nd was the half way leaders **Herts Gade** (**Imogen Ablett, John Saler, Sam Turner** and **Chris Jensen**). And Champions for 2011 of an event that will hopefully become an annual event were the **Herts Chess Team**

All in all, a terrific day, and a great event. As ever after all these things, there are lots of people to thank. First of all, I guess it has to be **Paul Hayler** who thought up this idea in the first place - and was then ably assisted by the rest of the committee who met in a pub, way back in November last year to thrash out the details and work out how it could all be done! Next has to be the **County Co-ordinators** who all gamely took on the job, arranged venues, trainers, went to various viewing days in the cold days of early Spring, organised team training and test riding, and got their teams altogether. Along the way, they also all collected sponsors who provided the clothes and saddle cloths and other items which made the whole thing even more exciting. Thank you to **Norton Heath** who provided us with such a great venue for the competition - in the lead up to this event they have gone the extra mile with arranging stabling, providing food, ensuring that the arenas looked beautiful and the whole place looked immaculate. On the day, as always, Tonie and her team ran around making sure that everyone was happy and helping out wherever they were needed - and Tonie - your bushes looked fab - even when they were damp! Thank you to all the team of helpers who

made the day run so smoothly - all those who volunteered to write and steward and score especially **Mo** and **Tony Bell**, who popped in to help for a couple of hours, and ended up staying all day! Big thanks to the **Coakley family** - poor Angela was too ill to ride, so handed the reins to daughter Daisy - who certainly brought home the bacon in style - and whilst they were busy with the riding, **Bonar** collected sheets for us ALL day and was brilliant! Every time we looked round, more sheets appeared, and we were able to keep the scores up to date all day - so thank you VERY much Bonar - you are a star! Thanks to my regional committee who have all helped in the build up - and especially to Hayley, Paul, Rachel, Eleanor, Barbara and Dan who were there on the day. Final thanks must go to our generous sponsors who ensured that riders went home with bundles of wonderful things. So here they are: **Wenlocks Equestrian, AK Services, Bugac Equestrian, Sian Sheridan, Team Hayler, The Barn Shop, Mark Ruddock** and the **Trakehner Society**.

Well done everyone, and see you all again next year?!