

THE EASTERN INTER COUNTY CHALLENGE FROM A COMPETITORS POINT OF VIEW

BD East holds the Inter County Challenge every year. It's a great event to be part of, but there are a few steps to be taken along the way. This is a guide of what you might expect, having had the experience of being on the winning team in 2019.

First, keep your eye out for notices from your County Coordinator (CCO). They will be advertising 'viewing days' for interested riders and their horses. The viewing days take place at various venues to try and make them as accessible as possible. There's no need to plait, just arrive in plenty of time in your normal training kit. Usually you will ride for 45 minutes with one other rider, under the tuition of your County coaches. The coaches are highly respected and qualified and will be assessing you and your horses' way of going. You will need to tell your CCO what level you would like to be considered for in the team if you're successful. A short list of riders is drawn up, and these riders are invited to attend a 'test riding' day.



There is a fee attached to attending a viewing day, this covers the cost of venue hire and trainers fees.

Following the viewing day, hopefully you'll be selected to attend a test riding day. You may be asked to turn out as you would for a competition. At the test riding day, you will be warmed up by the same coaches as you were on the viewing day, and then go forward in front of a suitably qualified judge to ride the specified test. Once everyone has ridden their test, helpful feedback is given from the judge. Again, there is a fee

attached to this part of the journey to cover costs.

Then there's a bit of a waituntil decisions are made regarding which combinations will represent their County on the Team. You will be notified by your CCO, and then, if successful, it's on to preparing for the competition itself. Twelve riders are selected from each county – 4 at Prelim, 4 at Novice and 4 at Elementary level.

There's usually social events organised in order to get to know your team mates, and some opportunities for further training if you'd like from the Inter County coaches.

It's expected that you arrive at the competition venue the night before in order to enjoy decorating the stable area (a competition in its own right but as part of the bigger competition) and to support the Freestyle competition which is a very





competitive and exciting start to the competition, with each county entering teams to ride a display, dressed in costumes, to music. This is followed by a get together to eat (take a portable bbq, food you like or buy from the venue and what you like to drink) the evening is fabulous fun! We stayed in a bed and breakfast, but most people used the venue's hook up facilities and slept in their lorries which cut down on costs for them. There is a fee to enter the competition itself and for overnight stabling.

On the big day, you will ride two tests, having been warmed up by your coaches. It's a full on, intensive, emotional and exciting day, with you and your team mates all looking out for each other. At the end of the day the presentations take place, and there's something for everyone!

We loved it - hope you will too! Standing on the top of the podium at the end of the weekend with fellow Cambridge Team mates was the icing on the cake! So if this has whet your appetite – look out for days being set up in your county, and look forward to 20-21 June at Keysoe for the 2020 Inter County Challenge.

That's me!

