

Smith presents a triple threat



Cheshire producers clean up, the working hunter course asks questions and a pony who survived pneumonia wins

Staffordshire County

VICKY SMITH pulled off a stunning championship hat-trick, taking three of the first qualifying slots for the Royal International (RIHS) 2022 on the way. She began her campaign with long term partner Bart, who won the exceeding 153cms coloured class before executing a blistering gallop to clinch the tricolour.

The duo has had a stellar career, winning at the Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) in 2018 and 2019, and at Hickstead in 2019 and again this season. Vicky co-owns the 11-year-old gelding, of unknown breeding from Ireland, with partner Alan Marnie, and has campaigned the horse for four years.

“He’s very special and loves a big atmosphere, the bigger the better,” said Vicky. “It’s been a slow start to the season and it’s lovely to come here today and be in a

By GILL KAPADIA

grass ring, with crowds of people and stalls. This is his HOYS preparation.”

Her next podium spot came with Janet Neeld’s elegant bay gelding Holmestones Tailor Made, who booked his 2022 Hickstead ticket with a win in the large hack section. Janet originally bought the son of Kilvington Scoundrel to compete herself, but work commitments prompted her to place him with Vicky; the combination has won a string of championships, including at White Rose and Kelsall.

Barely pausing for breath, Vicky was back in the ring on board the small riding horse Time Will Tell, a five-year-old mare owned and bred by Cathy Wood, who duly won her qualifying class and the section championship.

“She has been so lightly

shown because of Covid, but she competed in the Cuddy final with Simon Charlesworth as a three-year-old, so she has been educated,” said Vicky. “She

qualified for HOYS in Scotland, and we have high hopes for her.”

UTTERLY BOMBPROOF

STANDING reserve to Vicky in the hacks was the small section winner Sarah Lindsey with eight-year-old Up And Running. Sarah has owned the son of Willowcroft



Small section winner Up And Running takes the reserve hack title

“We have high hopes for her,” says Vicky Smith of Cathy Wood’s five-year-old small riding horse Time Will Tell, who heads her qualifying class before netting the section championship



Regal Bronze since he was three, purchasing him from an advert on Preloved.

“He was wrapped from head to toe in a blue tarpaulin, and I thought anything that bombproof was worth a look,” said Sarah, an amateur rider who works full-time.

Another amateur, Georgina Smith, rode former dressage mare Doberlina to reserve in the riding horse championship, qualifying for Hickstead in the large section at their first attempt. Georgina, a front-line Covid nurse last year, says it has taken time to accustom the horse to carrying a ride judge, but she has taken to the job well.

Sarah Walker took cob honours with the reigning RIHS champion Red Butler, owned by Lisa Davey, who booked his return visit to Hickstead in the lightweights.

Reserve was the amateur and maxi winner Colour Print, owned and home-produced by Heather McCloy, contesting their first-ever RIHS qualifier.

“He is an absolute saint and a wonderful sit-on,” said Heather, who plans to take the horse autumn hunting.

HOYS qualifiers were on offer for the first time in the ridden sections, attracting large entries. Robert Walker took a strong hunter championship with Jill Day’s six-year-old MHS Morning Master, who took the novice championship at Great Yorkshire. Despite being in his novice season, he has won three HOYS qualifiers on the bounce.

Reserve was Claire Oliver, making her first visit to Staffordshire County, with the middleweight winner Cudlic Spartacus, owned by Susan Granger. The seven-year-old gelding, by Foxcourt Andante, has been with the Olivers since he was three but has been lightly shown due to the pandemic.

“It’s so important for young horses to experience an atmosphere,” said Claire. “This is a lovely, busy show and the going in the main arena was superb.”

A horse who really caught the attention of the crowd was the heavyweight winner Dowdstown Purple, owned and ridden by Jane Collins, a former member



“HE WAS PERFECT”

KELLY DRIVER took the reserve coloured championship with the nine-year-old traditional pony Billy Wilson to round off an emotional day. The pony, bred by Kelly’s uncle of the same name, caught pneumonia when he was just four months old, so was hand-reared by Kelly who feared he would not survive.

“It was touch and go but he pulled through and that has made him very special,” said Kelly. “He was very backward and has taken a long time to mature, but last year did him good. There were no shows, so he had time to catch up.”

Sadly, Uncle Billy passed away recently, and the pony led the funeral cortege.

“We were placed second in our class as he was very cheeky in the gallop, but he was perfect in the championship, and I am thrilled to have featured in the championship line-up,” said Kelly. “I break and school ponies for a living and he is my hobby pony. He hacks, jumps and hunts and I will never sell him.”

AGAINST THE ODDS

of the European parliament who produces him from home.

This magnificent grey Irish Draught by Crosstown Dancer took his first HOYS ticket here. Although only a five-year-old and in his first season, he stood supreme at the Irish Draught Show at Arena UK and won two classes at Great Yorkshire.

He was purchased from the late Barry Marsh and came over

and qualifying for HOYS as a lightweight at Great Yorkshire.

Allan Birch received the loudest cheer of the day as he jumped one of only two clear rounds over Colin Ellison’s challenging course, to take the inaugural HOYS worker ticket to be offered at this show.

His ride, My Hilltop Clover, was contesting only his fourth-ever HOYS workers class and

“It’s so important for young horses to experience an atmosphere”

CLAIRE OLIVER

from Ireland as a four-year-old to start his showing career; he also carries side-saddle and contest workers classes.

“I’M VERY LUCKY”

A DELIGHTED Lucy Lockwood took the HOYS ladies ticket with her mother Julie’s home-produced “safe as houses” Chantilly Bojangles, a nine-year-old gelding by the showjumping stallion Kroongraaf.

“I’m very lucky because he is so genuine,” said Lucy. “I hack him side-saddle, he hunts and jumps and is just a perfect home-produced pet.”

Lucy fits her riding around her work in commercial landscaping and has notched up some cracking wins, standing champion amateur at Hickstead and Windsor,

made the job look easy. By the sport horse sire Clover Echo and owned by Camilla Southerington, My Hilltop Clover had never been to a show until he met Allan.

“My brother trains racehorses so I sent the horse to him during lockdown,” said Camilla. “He was getting lapped on the gallops by the thoroughbreds, but he just kept on going over these huge, fixed fences, and never gave up.”

“It was a tricky course, particularly down the hill to a style, which seemed to catch a lot of them out,” said Alan. “This horse has so much ability that his lack of experience simply isn’t an issue and he takes everything in his stride.”

My Hilltop Clover will be making his debut at Birmingham in the autumn. **H&H**



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Allan Birch pilots My Hilltop Clover to earn his HOYS worker ticket