

right Nicola Wilson and Master Banks lead after the cross-country only to lose the Bramham crown by a single show jumping time fault



Kiwi pips local rider to net second three-star

Andrew Nicholson notches up his second CCI*** victory in just three weeks with a new star, Nereo. Emily Llewellyn takes U25 honours, while Neil Spratt secures the CIC***. ELLIE HUGHES reports

ANDREW Nicholson is on a roll. Two three-star wins in the space of three weeks has left a detectable twinkle in this Kiwi's eye. Having secured victory in Saumur with Awebury at the end of May, he unleashed yet another secret weapon at Bramham—the stunning Spanish-bred nine-year-old Nereo.

But unlike his pillar-to-post victory in France, his Bramham win was harder to predict.

Lying third going into the final phase, Deborah Sellar's rangy chestnut put up a foot-perfect round and when the two above him faulted, Andrew secured his second Bramham title. It followed a win here in 2006 with Henry Tankerville.

"Nereo is the best jumper I have. He's very careful and I know that he'll jump off any stride and try his utmost to leave the fences up," said Andrew of the horse who also won advanced classes at

both Burnham Market and Belton earlier this season.

Having jumped what had looked like a great clear round, an enthusiastic Yorkshire crowd went wild as the overnight leader, local rider Nicola Wilson, crossed the line on Master Banks. But although beautifully executed, her round had been slow and deliberate and, having already set off on an emotional victory lap, she glanced at the scoreboard in horror to see that she had accrued three time penalties and dropped to second.

"I should have looked more closely before I got too excited," said Nicola afterwards. "He can be a bit spooky and he needs time to assess the fences," she added by way of an explanation.

Nevertheless, second place was still a great result and especially fitting given that this was the first time Master Banks' owner Sir Robert Ogden, who is better known in racing circles, has seen his horse in the flesh at a competition.

Pippa Funnell so nearly clinched a big win with her own and her mother's beloved Ensign. The pair had jumped a beautiful show jumping round but luck deserted them at the very last fence, which fell and dropped them to fourth.

While Pippa was kept from the podium, Piggy French's masterly clear on a relatively new ride, Some Day Soon, elevated her from fourth into third, an impressive feat given the combination's short acquaintance.

"He was bought at the back end of last year as I was looking for a top horse who wasn't going to cost the earth," explained Piggy, whose father Wally jointly owns Some Day Soon with Sue Crane and Miriam Midgley. "I wasn't expecting such a good result this quickly as we've not had much time to gel. He's a sensitive horse who's scared of his own shadow but he's always on your side."

Emily Gilruth scored her best result to date at this level, finishing fifth with Ashdale Cruise Master, while Lucy Holliday and High Times completed the top six.



above Piggy French and Some Day Soon show jump clear for third place