

## What a Performance Piggy!

Jonathan Chapman and Urbanus II en route to victory in intermediate section A



### GREAT WITCHINGHAM (1)

PIGGY French dominated the score sheets as Great Witchingham proved once again to be a lucky event for this Leicestershire-based rider. Her main achievement was victory in the advanced intermediate class but she also finished as runner-up in the OL.

Paired with Sir William and Lady Gillian Aldous's What A Performance, whom she has ridden for five years, she stormed into first place. The horse, as well as his rider, are regulars at this event and Piggy praised the son of Blue Laser, stating that the way he had performed merited a win.

"He knows the course better than I do and I have to hold on tight as he's so quick around the corners. If all horses had a brain like his it would make my life so much easier."

Piggy and the 16-year-old bay kept a clean sheet to finish on their dressage score of 30.7, overtaking first phase leaders Emily Baldwin and Drivetime, who had impressed the dressage judge significantly to score 26.4. However, when they came through the cross-country finish 25 seconds over the 5min 3sec optimum they were left with the runner-up spot.

Piggy, who was less lucky with Alvescot Prada, from whom she parted company at the influential steps at fence 3, has big plans for What A Performance.

"He is entered for Burnham Market and Badminton but we will

take each day as it comes. He owes us nothing but he really deserves a good three-day result."

Emily, meanwhile, was left contemplating her long journey from Kent.

"I'm sure Norwich has moved. It wasn't this far away before," she laughed, after explaining that the pair had taken her four hours.

"Drivetime is always a bit wild at the beginning of the season and today was the first time he was

actually rideable in the dressage phase," added Emily. "He was foot perfect across the country and he found it easy even though the ground had become a bit sticky as I was one of the last to go."

The pair is aiming for Badminton, taking in Belton's CIC "en route."

The weather was far from perfect and on the first day of competition rain threatened for the whole morning but even when it did finally pour down in the closing stages of the

intermediate section it had little effect on competitors' spirits.

Pippa Funnell, who notched up clear rounds on all of her rides, was one of several competitors to compliment the course.

"I had four good rides today. My only problem came when Ensign tripped coming out of the water. The going here was perfect as ever and the track really suits this early spring slot."

Organiser David Sayer said: "We made few changes to the intermediate course this year as it had been updated for last spring's event which was cancelled due to snow."

The three steps down at fence 3 was the first serious question and it proved to be the most influential obstacle throughout the day, causing problems from the off. In fact, Joseph Murphy and Electric Cruise, the first intermediate duo to leave the start box, retired following two refusals at this tricky combination.

One duo to sail through this fence as well as the 21 others was open intermediate winners Angus Smales and Tina Sharp's Ballywoony.

"I couldn't let Piggy win them all or someone would say it was fixed," joked Angus, a regular competitor at Blackwater Farm. "I found the course as testing as ever, but fence 3 has been here for years. People should have been more prepared for it."

Following an eye-watering 3am start, Angus clocked up just two time penalties across the country to steal first prize.

His nine-year-old mount made light work of the track and Angus rates the horse highly. "He moved quite quickly up the grades last

Harbour Pilot C and Joy Dawes, fifth in the advanced intermediate



Tom Crisp and Liberal, third in the Advanced Intermediate, winners Chloe Newton and Smart Lady



season so this year I'm consolidating at intermediate level and aiming for Burgie's CCI."

Finishing hot on Angus's heels was Piggy French with Chase The Moon, who finished just 0.5 of a penalty adrift to take second place.

### A Smart result

Chloe Newton partnered Smart Lady to victory in intermediate section B after a fast ride across the country pipped Caroline Edwards and Baggrave Summertime to the post.

It was a good weekend for the Leicestershire rider as not only was she one of just a few competitors to finish inside the optimum cross-country time but she also added another win to her tally when taking novice section G on Joy Newton and Lady Daresby's Opus One Ko.

Jonathan Chapman and Urbanus II captured intermediate section A. Jonathan acquired the ride on the

gelding by Armstrong when he was a five-year-old and Jonathan has taken him from intro to intermediate. The eight-year-old is owned by Felicity Norrie, who described him as being "just a dream".

Jonathan added: "He's the most consistent horse I've ever ridden. It really is a case of him doing exactly what it says on the tin. He's impeccably behaved in every way, except that he's mastered the art of unbolting his stable door!"

Organiser David Sayer once again fought a battle with the elements but the most serious consequence was several lories having to be towed on and off the ground.

"Running in March we are up against the weather and the light but it all ran like clockwork," said David who reported that there had been 12 falls over the three days of competition, none of which were serious.

Abbey Wass