

REPORTS

Piggy French makes it a hattrick at her 'lucky' event; Emily Llewellyn is the new Under-21

WESTON PARK (2)

PIGGY French's love affair with Weston Park continued when she won the CCI* with Judy Bradwell's Lemington Lets Dance. A winner here in 2005 with San Calido and in 2006 with Chicago II, Piggy and the 16th nine-year-old led the competition from start to finish.

When asked to describe Lemington Lets Dance's character, Piggy struggled somewhat, admitting that: "I don't really know him that well actually. You'd better ask Judy!"

The horse is based with Judy and she takes care of all the flatwork and fitness while Piggy literally gets on him at competitions, which is the only time he jumps.

"I'm absolutely delighted," said Judy. "He's gone from strength to strength with Piggy. She's such a lovely rider and he trusts her one hundred per cent. I don't think I took a breath in the show jumping as they had no room for error and they did rattle a couple."

As soon as the win was in the bag, Judy telephoned the horse's breeder, Ailsa Pease, to pass on the good news.

"Ailsa and I still keep in touch. She wrote to me after coming to one of my demonstrations a few years ago and said she had bred a horse whom she thought I would like, and she was right. He's just my stamp of horse really. He's a tough little thing and he never seems to get tired."

The horse's toughness was tested on Saturday as, while he made nothing of Janet Plant's cross-country track, he lost a shoe in the first water.

"He was a bit sore when another shoe went on, but he's absolutely fine again today," said Piggy. "He's a class horse and a real tough nut."

Luckily Lemington Lets Dance likes the top of the ground as, in conditions which were unprecedented at Weston Park three-day, the going was on the firm side, although the organisers had made every effort to alleviate matters by aerovating as much as possible.

Enjoying her first visit to Weston three-day, Pippa Funnell finished just over a point behind Piggy on Janet McIntyre's Blue Horizon. The horse is for sale, but Pippa was pleased with the way the ex-racer went, adding just 0.4 of a cross-country time fault to his dressage score.

"I haven't been here before, but I thought it was a super event. They coped really well with the high number of competitors, although, being one of the last to go across country on Saturday, the light was getting a bit close to the mark. I think the course rode fine and there were no really nasty fences."

"Janet [Plant, the organiser] has a tough job as she has to cater for such a wide range of experience and capability. If horses jumped well they were rewarded, although I personally would have had more to slow down some combinations who were in danger of hurting themselves."

Pippa also notched up first place in the CCI* on another ex-racehorse,



Piggy French and the "tough nut" Lemington Lets Dance en route to victory in the CCI**

Piggy makes it three in a row

Joanna and Robert Tomkinson's Special Constable.

"Ideally I would have run him in the two-star as well, but we were restricted to one ride each," said Pippa. Indeed, the organising team was forced to ballot out 70 horses from both the one- and two-star classes. "So I gave him a run in the one-star as I wanted to see how he would cope mentally with a three-day event," continued Pippa. "That's what I love about riding him – the mental challenge of finding a way to get the best out of him considering his background. I have to be quite clever at times and think one step ahead. He was good, although the dressage still needs a lot of work."

Third place in the CCI* went to Oliver Townend with Golden Hue. The eight-year-old has been brought back down to two-star level by Oliver to help him regain some confidence after he applied the brakes at both Blair and Chatsworth. He "busted around" the cross-country at Weston, according to Oli, and also showed a clean pair of heels in the show jumping arena. He will be heading to Puncheston or Bramham in the spring.

It's a battle to the wire

A battle raged in the show jumping arena in the Jump Savings Under-21 Championship between Emily

Llewellyn (Society Spice) and Charlotte Agnew (Out Of Africa Two). Both had gone clear inside the time across the country and posted identical scores of 44.7 in the dressage. Emily and Society Spice then emerged victorious after leaving the poles untouched, whereas Charlotte and Out Of Africa Two lowered one. Both combinations also notched up two time penalties in a section where the clock in the final phase proved problematic for some.

Emily said: "I came here wanting to win and I'm pleased that I did, although I was gutted with my dressage score. He's been quite wild lately and he got very tense in the arena, so I had to ride