



Daytime Round Up

Wednesday 4th October 2023

Seasoned winners back in business on day one of Horse of the Year Show

The pinnacle of the showing season got underway at Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) at Birmingham's NEC today, with the first two Championship classes reflecting the rich heritage of our long and esteemed relationship with the horse.

The **Mears Flooring Ladies Side Saddle Horse of the Year Championship** is an elegant spectacle of horse and rider, echoing bygone years. 19 starters immaculately turned out in graceful habits gave judges Alycia Pritchard and Michelle Underwood plenty to debate.

In the end it was seasoned HOYS winner Jayne Ross who piloted Lucy Cameron's eye-catching piebald mare KBF Lucia to the top spot. This is the mare's first season side saddle, but she is no stranger to HOYS' hallowed turf, having made her mark last year with a win in the Coloured Ridden Non-Native Horse of the Year as a five-year-old.

Jayne said: "She's been outstanding. She just has a way of looking through the bridle and smiling."

True quality clearly runs in the family, as second place went to former two-time Champion, Seabourne Silent Valley, owned and ridden by Francoise Babington. The 15-year-old gelding's full sister, Seabourne Swansdown, is the dam of KBF Lucia.

Another seasoned HOYS competitor, Neil Wray, was once again in the winner's spotlight with his own Plains Royalty in the **Harness Horse and Pony of the Year Championship**. This combination has retained the prestigious title every time out at HOYS in 2018, 2019, 2021 and now this year. The Hackney stallion is 12 years old by Plains Question out of Plains Claimero.

"To have a horse like him is just a gift; he's been champion every time out since 2017," said Neil. "It's phenomenal to have a horse that always performs well... he has presence and very good balance".

With four HOYS Championships under his belt and asked about his plans going forward, Neil replied: "We'll have to have a think because, where do we go from here? We just know we're very fortunate".

The final Championship of the morning in the Andrews Bowen International Arena was the **SIEB Racehorse to Riding Horse of the Year Championship**. Laura Tylor rode her own 12-year-old gelding, Reality Bites, to victory in just his second full season of showing and

first HOYS visit. Laura last rode at HOYS in the Cob class back in her early twenties and was over the moon with today's "very unexpected" win.

She said: "It's the best feeling in the world. I'm blown away. You dream of these things but don't expect them to actually happen.

"He's just the nicest person. He likes nothing better than a good scratch on his neck."

Reg, as he is known at home, ran in Ireland before coming over to England where Laura bought him three years ago.

Over in the **TopSpec Arena** the Mountain & Moorland ponies had been competing throughout the day. As the time came for the **Colne & Sweet Dreams Show Confectioners Mountain & Moorland Mini Pony of the Year Championship** all eyes were on the four combinations to be invited back; the first and second placed from the Lead Rein and First Ridden sections.

With style and elegance in abundance, it was the **Sweet Dreams Show Confectioners Mountain & Moorland First Ridden Pony of the Year** winner, Diana Leeming's Welsh Section A gelding, Thistledown San-Siro, who took the overall title with Lola Carabine in the saddle. No stranger to the Arena of Dreams, Rocky, as he is known at home, won the National Pony Society/Baileys Horse Feeds Mountain & Moorland Ridden Welsh A Pony of the Year, with Diana's daughter Lucinda, here at HOYS last year.

Rocky will return to the TopSpec Arena later this week in the Westown Stud Junior Mountain & Moorland Ridden Small Breeds Pony of the Year and the National Pony Society/Baileys Horse Feeds Mountain & Moorland Ridden Welsh A Pony of the Year, both with Diana's son, William, in the saddle.

And versatility is the name of the game for this flawless Thistledown pony: "He's stepped up and down the gears for my children," explained Diana, who has owned Rocky since 2019. "He's a true child's pony. William will fly around the field on him and do mounted games. One minute he's doing that, the next he's jumping, the next he's on a hack... He's a once in a lifetime pony."

Today's Champions under saddle will go forward to Sunday's respective Supreme Products Supreme Horse or Supreme Pony of the Year Championship.