



Daytime Showjumping Round Up

Saturday 7th October 2023

A great display of young talent in the Equine Rescue Services 128cm & 138cm Championships

Opening the proceedings on day four of Horse of the Year Show was the Equine Rescue Services 128cm and 138cm Championships. These finals see some of the show's youngest competitors demonstrate an unbelievable standard of discipline and enthusiasm for their sport.

12-year-old Ella Kay and chestnut mare Red Alert III produced a thrilling round in the jump off which featured just four pony and rider combinations. The technical track asked some tricky questions of the young jockeys, but the experience of the 20-year-old mare shone through. Rising to the occasion for Ella, the pair came home nearly three seconds quicker than the second placed rider, eight-year-old Annabel Widdowson.

Based in North Yorkshire, Ella has been riding the pony, known fondly as Miley, for the past two years and they competed in the same class here at HOYS last year. The little pocket rocket lapped up the atmosphere in the Andrews Bowen International Arena for the prize giving and whizzed down the iconic centre line with Ella grinning ear-to-ear.

Speaking of her win, Ella said: "I didn't realise quite how tight we were turning or how fast we were going. I have a lot of confidence with her, she knows her job so well and she really wants to win. We didn't have a great show here last year but to come back and win the class is a great feeling."

[Audio interview with Ella: <https://www.lloydbell.co.uk/access2/index.php?d=1477&b=32814>]

Onto the Equine Rescue Services 138cm Championship and the course built by Ben Townley whittled the riders down to just three through to the jump off. Showing maturity beyond her years, 13-year-old Hollie Gerkin from Essex performed a superb round with careful turns, and as the only rider to jump a double clear she secured her second win of the week.

Riding nine-year-old beautiful bay gelding, Another Barney owned by Emily and John Bowes, the combination have only been together for just over a year.

Holly said: "I knew I needed to jump clear after Portia [Taylor] had a pole down, so I just focused on that. He's very adjustable and usually quite careful so I just rode him forwards and hoped for the best. He has a big stride so he covers the ground well. It's amazing going into that arena; I know that so many of the big showjumping names have ridden and won here too."

With seven ponies here at HOYS this week, Holly has already racked up two wins (since she also won the Leading Pony Showjumper of the Year here on Thursday) and two second places. Aside from dedication and hard work, Holly partly gives credit to a lucky charm her aunty gave her at the beginning of the week.

"I never expected to do this well. Usually as long as I try my best I'm happy, But this year I have a lucky gem stone which I have had in my pocket for every class this week."

Whether it's the placebo effect or not, it's working out well for this promising young rider.

William Whitaker takes the Accumulator class

Moving on to the international showjumping and it was a win for William Whitaker in the Accumulator class, riding Caloro Ex Z. This class has an unusual format whereby each jump in the course has a specific number of points, which the rider accumulates once they clear it. At the last fence the riders have a choice of two options; the safer option worth 10 points or the joker fence worth 20 points. However, if the risk doesn't pay off and the joker fence falls, they get 20 marks deducted from their overall score. Ultimately, the highest score in the quickest time wins.

Having only taken over the ride from brother James Whitaker for the week, William produced an immaculately quick clear round in 44.00 seconds, whilst securing the maximum 65 points with the 15-year-old bay gelding.

Nicole Lockhead Anderson with I Am A Harley was hot on William's heels, treating the crowd to immense excitement as she cleared the joker fence and looked up at the clock, which stopped on 44.57 seconds - just over William's time.

William said after: "He's a very experienced horse so I knew what I needed to do. We've had him in the stables for a long time and he's been a good horse for my brother James so I knew that side of it was taken care of it was just my job to try and keep it smooth and be as quick as I could. The joker fence was big so you had to really ride it, but I had walked the distances so I made it as easy as I could for him.

"We've got some nice young horses at home at the moment, so we thought we would stand more chance of winning by bringing a more experienced horse like Caloro. It's always a pleasure to ride here at Horse of the Year Show, so then to get a win is even better."

[Audio interview with William

<https://www.lloydbell.co.uk/access2/index.php?d=1477&b=32815>]