



Daytime Showjumping Round Up

Sunday 8th October 2023

Just call me a winner! James Whitaker takes the British Horse Feeds Speedi-Beet Grade C Championship

The final day of competition got underway at Horse of the Year Show 2023, and 22 combinations came forward to contest the British Horse Feeds Speedi-Beet Grade C Championship. Riders have been competing throughout the year, up and down the country, to qualify for the final which culminates at HOYS this week. Previous winners of this national showjumping class include the likes of Nick Skelton, Geoff Billington, Tim Stockdale and William Funnell.

Landing the title this year was James Whitaker riding eight-year-old bay gelding, Just Call Me Henry, who is by the magnificent stallion Argento. James was second to go in the jump off and produced an effortless quick round with a time of 34.03 to win by nearly two seconds, ahead of second place Alexander Barr.

James said: "I'm really pleased with him. He's a naturally fast horse anyway. Even in the first round he travelled well so I knew I just needed to keep the fences up. This year he's outdone himself, he won a 4* at Hickstead and he's won here at HOYS; he just finds it effortless.

"I'm not sure what's next with him. This was my plan by the end of the year to come here, and we've done it, so now it's time to make a new one. He's a lovely horse and always tries hard. Sometimes he gets a bit sharp and unsettled so the trick is to keep his mind at ease. But once he's focused, he jumps really well."

Audio interview with James Whitaker:

<https://www.lloydbell.co.uk/access2/index.php?d=1477&b=32819>

The Speed Horse of the Year goes to Ireland's Shane Breen

If there's a showjumping class that can really get the crowd going, it's the Speed Horse of the Year. As the name suggests, it tests the rider's ability to plan, adjust and go for gold in a bid to beat the clock, this time with a field of 31 horses.

Shane Breen and Scarteen, a 10-year-old grey gelding, blazed their way to success moving quick between fences and taking brave turns. Being ninth to go, the experienced combination set the bar high with 52.33 seconds to beat. Britian's Jodie Hall McAteer came close finishing on 52.78 – just half a second behind. Another close contender was Mark Edwards who went a second quicker, but it cost him a fence.

Shane was delighted to pick up the win for Ireland on a horse that he has quite a soft spot for. He says: "Scarteen is a homebred horse. I sold half of him as a five-year-old, but I then bought that half back at the beginning of this year. He's just wonderful; he's super consistent and really careful. He can jump Grand Prix classes and he's perfect for a class like this because he's so naturally quick."

"It's lovely to win here - Horse of the Year Show is a very special show. It's lovely to see such a great crowd here this year too and it's a pleasure to ride in front of such an appreciative audience. You never know if you've done enough and when you're early to go you're there to be caught. There were so many great rounds and it's lovely to see so many competitive riders trying to win."

He adds: "I don't think a horse is set for one specific class, they should be versatile. Once they know what's expected of them you can push them. Scarteen is super-brave so he likes to do a Derby class, and then he's very scopey so can do a Grand Prix and then he's really fast so can win a speed class like this. The nicest place to ride him is in the ring. He winds himself up in the warmup, but once he's in the ring he focuses and knows his job. At home he just needs ticking over, slow and easy work, we don't have to jump him much. From a preparation perspective he is very easy, there's no real riding to him. The perfect old man's horse!"

[Audio interview with Shane Breen:

<https://www.lloydbell.co.uk/access2/index.php?d=1477&b=32820>]

Experience shines through in the Thistledown Investments Six Bar

John Whitaker and Shane Breen take the Thistledown Investments Six Bar challenge by storm to end the daytime showjumping classes on Sunday at Horse of the Year Show. The class requires great athleticism from the horse and strong composure from the rider to keep the horse settled down the line of imposing fences.

Five riders made it through to round four. William Whitaker, William Funnell and David Simpson all picked up four faults, leaving Shane Breen and John Whitaker to go head-to-head in round five.

The crowd were behind them every step of the way, but the pair could not be separated, despite the final fence standing at 1.85cm. In a joint win, the two experienced horsemen shared the Six Bar title. The roar of applause from the audience as they both took off for their joint lap of honour was a highlight of the week in the Andrews Bowen International Arena.

"I was watching each of John's rounds and I was trying to copy him," said Shane. "It's a pleasure to be in a class like this with John Whitaker. He's such a legend."

Speaking of the warm reception John receives every time he enters the arena at Horse of the Year Show, John jokes: "I don't think it's down to my performance, I think I've just been around for so long."

John's horse Sharid is an experienced 14-year-old bay gelding, whilst Shane's horse Cato Boy is just nine.

John continues: "Sharid was quite fresh at the beginning of the week. Yesterday he jumped well and then today even better. He's a good horse for a Six Bar and it all came together."

Speaking of what was going on behind the scenes during the class, Shane adds: “After we both jumped clear in round four we had the option to just split the prize there and then, but I said to John ‘shall we go for the craic?’ and when there’s a full house like there is in there today, the crowd just love to watch us give it a go, so we did. The fact we both jumped clear makes it even more special.”

Audio interview with Shane Breen and John Whitaker:

<https://www.lloydbell.co.uk/access2/index.php?d=1477&b=32821>