



Left to right:  
 Claire McCaffrey-Clarke,  
 Jodie Maile,  
 Maryanne Horn,  
 Debbie Cox  
 (individual gold medallist),  
 Lady Peckham

# Mudchute Equestrian Centre Storms Riding School Team Championship

Words by Anna Bruce and photography by Fiona Rafferty

Amidst inclement conditions, Mudchute Equestrian Centre stormed the inaugural Team London Riding School Championship held at Dressage at Hickstead on 22nd June 2011 to take team gold.

Dressage guru Dane Rawlins and Dulwich Riding School, where Dane learnt to ride, devised the championship to provide London's riding school riders with the opportunity to compete, gaining inspiration from the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The championship garnered support from HOOF – the Olympic Legacy project of the British Equestrian Federation – and in so doing gained an enviable prize list including TOGGI clothing from the Team GBR collection to horse bedding from EcoComfyBed.

## Golden Mudchute

Mudchute's four-strong team of Rebecca Mills and Sarah O'Hagan both 15, Rebecca Tipple, 18, and Lisa Westerland, 25, typified the aim of the competition, largely having only been able to experience a competition within their own centre.

Add to this the challenge of having only an eight minute warm-up on a riding school horse selected at random, and then performing a novice standard dressage test in Hickstead's international arena and early

tests were somewhat exciting.

Rebecca Tipple had to remain particularly cool when her allotted steed, Trio, exited the arena, and said, "The joke we keep making is that I got to jump at Hickstead - out of a dressage arena - and I don't suppose many people have done that", adding, "The whole competition has been a great experience."

Team Trainer, Jackie Cheeseman, concurred, "The competition definitely challenged everybody and we had no expectation of ourselves but to win has definitely put Mudchute on the map."

Scoring 2212 points, Mudchute won in convincing style, ahead of Trent Park Equestrian Centre in silver on 2050 points, and Deen City Farm on 2011 points in bronze.

## Trent Park Equestrian Centre

Trent Park Equestrian Centre fielded a team consisting of two working pupils, Mylton Burden and Jessica Magennis and two 'professionals' – instructors at the centre, Helen Taylor and Doriel Watson, who both incurred a 15 point handicap on their scores.

Helen said, "It's a great initiative to get everyone together, to give students the opportunity to compete and it was brilliant for the horses as well."

Indeed the competition became something

of an advert for riding school horses from ex-competition horses to perhaps a favourite in Deen City Farm's, Tarron.

Rehomed to the city farm by the Blue Cross, the 14.2hh traditional black cob gelding proved perfect at allowing riders to demonstrate their skills as tests were judged purely on riding ability with no marks for the horse.

"Our ponies are the stars", declared team member, Sarah Clifford, who, like her fellow team mates, Francesca Bailey and Kathryn Whybrow, started riding at Deen City Farm which offers heavily subsidized riding lessons, and has had minimal previous experience of riding outside the Farm gates!

Team Trainer, Jo Henbrey, said, "Having seen the team ride from complete beginners it's difficult to gauge how they are doing, but to see little old us and our little old ponies doing so well at Hickstead makes me really proud."

## Docklands' Debbie Cox takes individual gold

Anticipation for the individual championship grew as top riders from each of the eight teams headed to the ride-off, performing a specially-devised test including shoulder-in to leg-yield and simple changes.

In something of a shake up, only one of



First Team Competition, Mudchute Equestrian Centre: Rebecca Tipple, Sarah O'Hagan, Rebecca Mills, Lisa Westerland

Second Team Competition, Trent Park Equestrian Centre: Doriel Watson, Jessica Magennis, Helen Taylor, Mylton Burdon

Third Team Competition, Deen City Farm: Sarah Clifford, Francesca Bailey, Kathryn Whybrow

Fourth Team Competition, Wimbledon Village Stables: Jess Crowe, Susi Wood, Sasha Andrews, Elaine Taylor



Fifth Team Competition, Kingston Riding Centre: Anita Prekop, Jessica Rowney, Katie Noble, Jasmine Lyster



Sixth Team Competition, Dulwich Riding School: Lucy Croot, Alice McKain, Sebastian Petragalo, Leah Dunmall

Not pictured:  
 Seventh Team Competition, Newham Riding School: Debbie Cox, Craig Curtis, Corinne Allen, Hayley Abraham



Eighth Team Competition, Street Kick Riding Centre: Perry Mould, Melanie Pecheur, BJ Bartley, Leonie St Ange



Debbie Cox (NRS), first individual competition



Sarah Clifford (DCF), third individual competition



Sarah O'Hagan (MEC), fourth individual competition



Jess Crowe (WVS), fifth individual competition



Helen Taylor (TPEC), sixth individual competition



Lucy Croot (DRS), seventh individual competition



Perry Mould (SKRC), eighth individual competition



Marianne Horne presents BJ Barclay of Street Kick Riding School with his prize for the 'Most Promising Rider'

the team medalists made it to the individual podium.

Deen City Farm's Sarah Clifford became a double bronze medallist, scoring 77.36%, just behind Kingston Riding Centre's, Katie Noble on 78.89% for individual silver.

But it was Debbie Cox from Newham Riding School at Docklands Equestrian Centre, scoring 82.22% who was to receive the individual gold medal from Lady Pauline Harris of Peckham.

Lady Harris, said, "Starting as I did riding a Shetland pony on Tooting Bec Common to be due to be competing in the Prix St Georges here tomorrow, I was very surprised and pleased with the way different riders handled the horses - the standard of riding was very good."

Debbie, 34, said, "I was brought up in a riding school and have seen what horses have done for so many people", adding, "I've been instructing at Newham Riding School for five years and to be part of a team today that includes two riders who couldn't afford to ride so had subsidized lessons, became volunteers, and were competing here today, shows how many doors riding can open. I hope it doesn't stop here."

Her wish could be granted as Debbie received a voucher for a lesson with international dressage rider Emile Faurie

from the Emile Faurie Foundation – a charity which helps disadvantaged children and young people experience the joy and pleasure of riding and caring for horses.

Thanks to support from HOOF, Debbie also took home a TOGGI Haydock blouson from the Team GBR range and Newham Riding School will receive a pallet of EcoComfyBed.

Jodie Maile, volunteer chair of the HOOF-supported London Horse Network presented these prizes, along with goodie bags for every centre from Localrider magazine including a free subscription to the monthly stock, gloves and a discount voucher from online retailer, Cavaletti Clothing.

Jodie said, "The reaction to the running of the Championship has been immensely positive and it's been another great way of getting the riding centres together", adding, "There's been talk among the instructors to do some yard-swaps - partly because some pupils want to visit and ride the horses they've seen or had the chance to compete on today."

Claire McCaffrey-Clarke and Janet Coe both attended as representatives of the British Horse Society which donated goodie bags including discount vouchers for the BHS Bookshop to all competitors.

Claire said, "It is great to see BHS-approved centres supporting the Team London Riding School Championship, and while it's a pity Dulwich Riding School who put in so much work in organizing the competition and whose riders raised £1500 to ensure entry fees were waived this year, didn't make it to the podium, it was lovely to see a rider, trained at the school, win a special award."

BJ Barclay, 16, who is part of the Street Kick Riding Club, a club that aims to help inner city kids off the streets and on to horses, won the 'most promising rider' award from the three judges, Maryanne Horn, Margaret Drewe and British Olympian, Kirsty Mephram.

And Kirsty gave the riders a taste of pure dressage during the lunch break – performing a dressage to music routine aboard Rebecca Vinter and Anne Baldock's 12 year-old stallion, Calderon.

So transfixed were the competitors that those due to compete after the break failed to make it in to the saddle in time, leading Dane Rawlins to comment, "It's well known that Dressage at Hickstead runs to time – I'll have to sort that out."

But as the day drew to a close, the smiles on the faces of those offered this enviable chance said it all.