



Magic Millions Festival of British Eventing Programme Form Guide

Who will take the titles at the Magic Millions Festival of British Eventing in 2018?

The Magic Millions British Open CIC3* title is an accolade all riders would like to have on their CV – last year's winner, Gemma Tattersall, said it was one of her great ambitions – and the roll of honour includes such legends of the sport as Olympic gold medallists Sir Mark Todd, Blyth Tait and Andrew Hoy, plus Mary King, Pippa Funnell, William Fox-Pitt and the current world number one Oliver Townend.

The competition was an early pioneer of the reverse-order cross-country format; a great test of horsemanship and requiring nerves of steel, it provides an enthralling climax to the competition as riders and horses fly around Gatcombe Park's bowl in a high-octane contest.

Two top riders who have yet to add the title to their collections are Marlborough-based New Zealanders Jonelle and Tim Price. Jonelle, one of the world's most stylish cross-country riders, has entered her Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials winner, the speedy mare Classic Moet, and Tim rides Pats Jester, winner of Ballindenisk, Ireland, last year.

Their compatriot Sir Mark Todd, who has been competing here since the start – he won on his double Olympic champion Charisma back in 1985 and 1988 - has his 2012 Olympic team bronze medallist NZB Campino and the experienced Dan Jocelyn rides Dasset Cool Touch.

Australia has a strong hand in the 2015 winner Christopher Burton – watch how economically and smoothly he rides across the country – who is well mounted on Polystar I and Graf Liberty. Paul Tapner (Bonza King of the Rouges), Bill Levett (Alexander NJ and Shannondale Titan) and Sam Griffiths with his 2015 Badminton winning mare Paulank Brockagh and the veteran four-star horse Happy Times.

Ireland is represented by Elizabeth Power, one of the first riders to achieve the elusive optimum cross-country time at The Festival. Sweden is represented by last year's runner-up, Ludwig Svennerstal, Italy by the always competitive Vittoria Panizzon and, in addition, The Festival welcomes the first Norwegian competitor in the British Open, Heidi Bratlie Larson.

All eyes will be on the British entry, which includes leading contenders for the squad at the World Equestrian Games in the USA in September such as defending champions Gemma Tattersall and her wonderful thoroughbred

galloper Arctic Soul and Nicola Wilson with her eye-catching black mare Bulana, a European team gold and individual bronze medallist.

Gatcombe-based Tom McEwen has a great chance on the elegant grey Strike Smartly as does Francis Whittington (Hasty Imp) and the reigning national under-25 champions Emily King and Dargun, a brilliant jumper by German show jumper Marcus Ehning's great stallion For Pleasure.

In addition, there are three riders who excel in this format of competition: Sarah Cohen with her long-time partner Treason, Izzy Taylor with the talented Be Touchable, a four-time international winner, and Director General as well as Oliver Townend, who has plenty of horse power with the New Zealand thoroughbred Black Tie II, Ulises, a three-star winner at Chatsworth this year, and CIC3* specialist Cillnabradan Evo.

Competition will be no less fierce for the prestigious Smith & Williamson British Intermediate and the Dodson & Horrell British Novice titles as many of the afore-mentioned riders, as well as Kristina Cook, Harry Meade and William Fox-Pitt, have rides in these classes, ensuring a weekend of brilliant sport and a showcase for the best horses in the country.

Kate Green