

SUNDAY 5 AUGUST

WHEELER LIFTS THE CORINTHIAN CUP

Lucy Wheeler and King Creole VD N Ranch kept a clean sheet from pillar to post to win the TopSpec Challenge for The Corinthian Cup, a National Restricted Novice Championship at the Magic Millions Festival of British Eventing.

This was a first ever visit to The Festival for Lucy, 27, who had never been to spectate, let alone compete.

"It's been a new experience for both of us, but a real buzz. I thought he'd be spooky in the atmosphere, so he has surprised me," said Lucy, who is head girl at a point-to-point and hunt yard in East Sussex. "My horses have to fit in around work, but the summer is generally quieter and my boss, Stuart Robinson, has been very generous, letting me have two weeks off to come here and go on to Hartpury next week for the CCI*."

The pair produced a consistent dressage test to lie fourth on 27.5, jumped up to second with a clear round in the showjumping and took the win when the two-phase leaders, Jethro Thompson and Seapatrack Hint Of Cruise, clocked up a hatful of time penalties.

The eight-year-old King Creole, whose stable name is 'Bubba', is owned by Graham Jack, who produced him initially. Lucy took over the ride in 2016.

"He's quite arrogant and opinionated, but he loves the job," said Lucy.

Runner-up Morgan Kent only started eventing in April this year. She is more regularly seen on the showjumping circuit and had hot-footed it back from Slovakia, where she finished fourth in a grand prix last week, to compete here on her own eight-year-old mare, Felda.

"I bought her as a foal from an auction in Holland. I'd always thought she'd make a good event horse as she really moves, and this year I thought it was about time I gave it a go," explained Morgan.

Unsurprisingly, the pair were foot-perfect over the coloured poles and a speedy clear across country saw them complete on their dressage score of 29.5.

Third-placed Harriet Ford was delighted to be on the podium with her "horse of a lifetime" According To Archie.

“He injured a tendon two years ago while competing at the South of England. I’d always said that anything he did afterwards would be a bonus,” said Harriet, who led the dressage on a score of 25.5, but lost the top spot when she lowered a show jump.

There were 30 clears from 41 cross-country starters; the most influential fence being the House of Fraser Water (11ab) below the Avening Banks.

Course Designer Captain Mark Phillips, commented: “Since the TopSpec Challenge for The Corinthian Cup was introduced to The Festival in 2015 we have seen the best amateur riders take on the unique challenge of riding at Gatcombe Park. This year’s class was a fantastic competition and the winner was thoroughly deserving.”

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