

SATURDAY 4 AUGUST

TOM MCEWEN RIDES INTO HISTORY

Every rider wants to see their name on the roll of honour at the prestigious Magic Millions Festival of Eventing and now Tom McEwen, who currently boasts a terrific string of young horses, has won his first national title, the Smith & Williamson British Intermediate Championship.

His winning mount was Vicky Bates and David Myers' chestnut mare CHF Cooliser, a prolific winner at intermediate level who coped well with the pressure and intensity of Captain Mark Phillips' championship cross-country course where Herculean efforts have been made to provide good going in the heatwave.

The pair were third in the dressage phase, rose to second with a clear show jumping round after dressage leader Laura Schroter's unfortunate three rails down on Willem Van Wup, and then completed the second fastest cross-country time – 8.8 penalties – to take first prize.

"She's got quite a bit of warmblood in her so I wasn't sure how her stamina would be, but she tried her heart out and absolutely loved it," said Tom, who is now based at Gatcombe Park and is on the British longlist for the World Equestrian Games in September.

Only four riders achieved time penalties in single figures on Gatcombe's famously undulating cross-country track and Alexander Bragg, who has recently been added to the British squad, was fastest of all, just two seconds quicker than Tom. He rose from 11th place after dressage to second on Sarah Hughes' Shannondale Percy, a new ride for Alex this season, the eight-year-old having been previously ridden by William Fox-Pitt.

"He jumped his socks off and was really drawing me to the fences," said a delighted Alex, who revels in the big atmosphere of The Festival as crowds line the bowl to cheer riders home across country. "I love it here when the crowds are cheering. The organisers always run things so well here."

Australia's Sam Griffiths was third on the 13-year-old mare Gurtera Cher and Pippa Funnell, the leader after show jumping, was sixth on Maybach.

"It's always exciting to think what these horses might go on to do," said Peter Phillips, Director of the Magic Millions Festival of British Eventing. "You only have to look at the list of previous champions – four-star winners like Tamarillo, Two Thyme, Tom Cruise and Land Vision – to see how the Smith & Williamson British Intermediate Championship can be the start of great things. Tom is a rider clearly on the up and I'm delighted to see his name added to the roll of honour."