

## Valencia vanquishes

Charlotte Dujardin lands her fourth Horse of the Year Show dressage title



Mount St John Valencia gives Charlotte Dujardin the Future Elite title with 78.04%

Horse of the Year Show, NEC, Birmingham

CHARLOTTE DUJARDIN retained the Future Elite dressage title for the fourth year running, this time riding Emma Blundell's fiery mare Mount St John Valencia. Despite tension creeping into the canter work, resulting in a few mistakes in the changes, the nine-year-old pulled off a performance full of expression and cadence, with amazing impulsion softly controlled by Charlotte to score 78.04%.

This is only the mare's second-ever inter I freestyle — her first attempt was at the British Dressage national championships

*'I don't expect perfection yet'*

CHARLOTTE DUJARDIN OF MOUNT ST JOHN VALENCIA

last month, which she also won. "She'd only done three inter I and one freestyle before tonight, so is still very green at the level," said Charlotte. "It was a big ask for her to perform at that level in this atmosphere, but you can't recreate those environments and the only way to get them used to it is to go and do it. She was looking

at the big screen in the middle of the arena while doing her lines of changes, and it made her a bit tense, but I don't expect her to do it perfectly yet.

"Next year she'll be stronger and have more under her belt, and I know she can cope with it."

Carl Hester's former student Katie Bailey landed the runner-up spot riding Hannah Dovey's 10-year-old gelding Eagle Nouvelle. The gelding's forward, expressive test earned 77.62%, just 0.42% behind Charlotte.

"He was a bit nervous in the arena walk, so I was unsure how he'd be with all the crowds, but he felt relaxed once we got in there," said Katie. "He noticed the big screen, which made him trip, but he carried on fine, and it was a great experience for him."

Lara Edwards pulled off a fluid, technical performance for third, including a line of changes with one hand, riding her and Tracey and Laura Milner's 10-year-old Jazz son Jazzed Up.

"He hasn't had the easiest start to life and came to me having been passed around, but as soon as I sat on him, I knew he was special," said Lara. "It took me six months to get him on side, and he's been amazing ever since." **H&H**

By STEPHANIE BATEMAN

## Plains Royalty retains crown

Neil Wray and his striking hackney stallion add to their incredible record

Horse of the Year Show, NEC, Birmingham

By SARAH RADFORD

NEIL WRAY'S hackney stallion Plains Royalty has been unbeaten since the summer of 2017, and continued to forge an incredible track record with a second consecutive Horse of the Year Show (HOYS) harness title.

The championship came down to a head-to-head between two previous winners, as judges Mary Ford and Justin Cowles decided between the eight-year-old hackney horse and Jessie Dudley Apicella's pony Aghaderg Stand And Deliver.

The striking Plains Royalty had displayed lovely manners during his show, with his only blip a moment of tension as the judges sent the final eight out.

He was given the nod, with Jessie's 2014 and 2015 winner taking reserve.

"He got a bit frustrated as we were held back and couldn't go forward. I did wonder if I'd lost it for a second, but one of the judges told me she thought he was very special," said Neil.

"We've had some good horses, but never one as good as this."

With duties as British Driving Society (BDS) chairman taking some of Neil's attention this year, the eight-year-old has only been lightly shown, winning the

championship at the BDS Annual and the Royal Welsh, where he was reserve supreme of the show.

### CLEAR ROUND

THE Osborne Refrigerators double harness scurry championship was blitzed by Alison Osborne, who won every heat with both her small and large pairs before taking the championship with the smalls, Woody and Buzz.

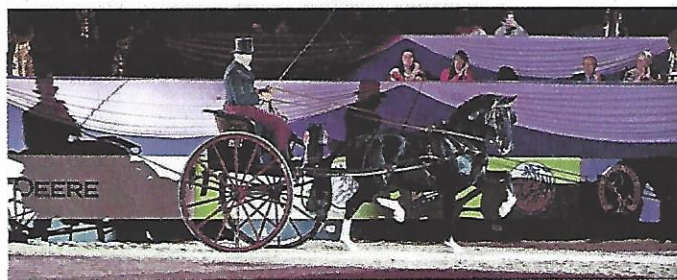
In an incredibly clean round, the ponies stopped the clock in an astonishing 42.46sec — a full two seconds up on multiple champion Jemma Millman with her small pair, Tigger and Owl, who settled for reserve.

Last into the ring with Chip and Dale, Alison made another strong bid, but clipped the first cone to drop them to fifth.

This Woody and Buzz have only been together for a month as the "original" Buzz was injured.

"I'm over the moon. They've been brilliant all week," said Alison, who has owned the eight- and 11-year-old ponies since they were three.

"We had 46 seconds in the first heat, then 44, but I never thought we could do 42. It was a brilliant course tonight," she added. **H&H**



Neil Wray and Plains Royalty retain the HOYS harness title

### RESULTS

Steve Dent Stunt harness horse and pony of the year.—1, Plains Royalty (N Wray); 2, Aghaderg Stand And Deliver (J Dudley-Apicella); 3, Hartland Carriages' Star And Metts (J Hartland). Osborne Refrigerators double harness scurry, rmd one, sec B.—1, Osborne Refrigerators Chip & Dale (A Osborne); 2, Omega Equine Darkhorse Fred & Barney (G Roberts); 3, Piglet and Eeyore (J Millman). rmd one, sec A.—1,

Osborne Refrigerators Woody & Buzz (A Osborne); 2, Tigger & Owl (J Millman); 3, Beautiful Bodies Pick & Mix (J Starr). rmd two, sec A.—1, Osborne Refrigerators Woody & Buzz; 2, Marlow Saddler L4 Leather (S Edwards); 3, Beautiful Bodies Pick & Mix. rmd two, sec B.—1, Osborne Refrigerators Chip & Dale; 2, Omega Equine Darkhorse Fred & Barney; 3, Eric & Ernie (K Merry). Osborne Refrigerators double harness scurry of the year championship.—1, Osborne Refrigerators Woody & Buzz; 2, Tigger & Owl; 3, The Marlow Saddlers L4 Leather.