

A little rain wouldn't go amiss at horse trials

Alec Lochore, event director of the EQ Life Burnham Market Horse Trials, has been running the event for well over 10 years. Along with his team at Musketeer Event Management, Alec organises a host of equestrian events across the country including Chomondly Castle, Blair Castle and Houghton International. EQ Life stole a few minutes of his time at the event to discuss planning, courses and his 2014 hopes.

■ How has the preparation of the horse trails gone?

"Bizarrely while everywhere else around the country is covered in a foot of water, we have been praying for rain. It's been dry here for a couple of weeks but we have a great covering of grass that softens the course and we have fantastic machinery that helps maintain and ensure that great going is upheld."

■ What changes have you made to the course and what new things have you introduced?

"Some of the combinations that come to Burnham have been coming for years so I am conscious that changes need to be made. This year we are following the same route but within each level there have been some variations. What I have also had to take into account is the forthcoming championship events such as Badminton in May and the World Equestrian Games (WEG) in the summer. Many of the top riders competing here this weekend will be aiming for them so I needed to make a course that wasn't soft so that the selectors could start choosing individuals and riders could gain qualification, but also a course that wasn't too tough so that the horses don't peak too early and they perform their best at the championships. After all I want everyone to have a good run, but I especially want to see Great Britain win gold at WEG!"

■ How has this horse trials differed from previous ones?

"As we run the international classes here we see many competitors from around the globe come to compete, but this year I believe we have had more nationalities than ever before, around 23. They have come from all over, from the Netherlands to China, we even had to go out and find a Hong Kong and Indian flag in response!"

Rosalind canters to couple of victories on opening day

■ Action from the opening day of the EQ Life Burnham Market Horse Trials.

Pictures: MATTHEW USHER

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The EQ Life Burnham Market International Horse Trials started in fine fashion yesterday as a big line-up of BE100 and Novice competitors took to the west Norfolk hills, to contest for eventing glory.

In the morning BE100 competitors kicked off the weekend with Lincolnshire rider Rosalind Canter snapping up two wins and a third in BE100 Section E on Spring Ambition. The 15.3hh dark bay mare, owned by Burnham Market's very own commentator Ian Scott, performed a fantastic test and added nothing to her score to finish on 28.

Local riders also claimed glory with Sandra Morgan, from North Wootton near King's Lynn, taking third in a very competitive BE100 Section D on her own Stald Mejses Cordel. Being their second event of the season the pair hope to move up to Novice at their local event - Little Downham - at the end of May. Despite scoring a good 35 in the dressage, Sandra explained that Cordel isn't always as easy.

"He has improved with age but doesn't like dressage and because of this can be a tricky ride. I would never get on without an air jacket as he is very sharp but this year we have turned a corner and he's starting to play ball."

Nevertheless Sandra describes him as "lovely" and a long term ambition is to aim for Houghton 1* in a few years' time.

Back from injury and back on the winner's podium was Suffolk rider, Liam Brinkley who took second in the BE100 Open section on



■ Oliver Townend in action yesterday on Kanga Rouge (above) and On Show.

Kincourage. Liam, who broke his leg in a car crash a few years ago, is starting his first season back in eventing since the accident after taking some time out to recover and regain confidence.

"I started eventing again but found myself over-checking and feeling nervous. I've been riding but remodelled Kincourage for showjumping, so have been concentrating on that." The "slightly bonkers" grey gelding and Liam now head to Poplar Park next weekend to compete in their first Novice of the season.

Kiwi Olympian Caroline Powell claimed the win in BE100 section E, and in the Open Novice under 18 class

Camilla Hope took the win.

The tough course proved troublesome for Cambridgeshire rider, Phoebe Buckley who took a crash on the cross-country and had to be air lifted to hospital with a suspected fractured hip, but for most it was trouble free with riders describing it as a 'fair challenge' with 'positive changes'.

The action continues today with top athletes battling it out across the intermediate and advanced courses and with plenty of fun for all the family by the main arena with over 37 trade stands, a fun fair and dog agility, non-equestrian members of the family won't be bored.

