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Houghton welcomes selection of world class talent once again



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■ Action from day one of the Houghton International Horse Trials.

Photos: IAN BURT

EQUESTRIANISM

Vanessa Britton

The opening of the world renowned EQ Life Houghton International Horse Trials took place at the glorious Houghton Hall country estate in west Norfolk yesterday.

This weekend sees the return of the annual equestrian event, which hosts a selection of world class talent.

Following on from Wednesday's competition, overnight leader Claire Fielding and Jenga from Essex, managed to hold the lead on an impressive score of 38.6 in the CCI* class, but now shares the top spot with Willa Newton on Caja 20, who took the same score.

Norfolk young rider and Houghton first timer, Georgina Kidner, performed a professional test under intense conditions to score 50.6 on Thornfield Jones in the CCI* class. 19-year-old Georgie, who is a former South Norfolk Pony Club member, currently works for Olympic New Zealand rider Caroline Powell, based near Bury St Edmunds.

As well as this being their first trip to Houghton, the event is also



■ Riders from around the world will be entertaining the Houghton crowds.

their first international competition together, which Kidner sees as an amazing experience.

"I was quite nervous going into the dressage, but once their I managed to relax and focus," she said. "The cross country is much longer than I have ever done before, it's a good test and has been built amazingly well. I think some fences will catch people out but hopefully if I ride my lines right I should be fine."

Thursday was also the start of the

CCI** and the Nation's Cup competition. In the CCI** section Dirk Schrade and Mr Tomtom from Germany take the lead on a dressage score of 42.

Houghton hosts the only British leg of the Nations Cup competition, which sees teams from as far afield as Australia and New Zealand enter with the hope of being crowned champions at the final competition held in Holland in October.

Britain has a successful track record as a team at Houghton,



coming third in 2014 and winning the team event in 2013. This year Britain's team consists of Georgie Strang, Francis Whittington, Sarah Bullimore and eventing legend Pippa Funnell.

Two of the four team-mates completed their dressage with Pippa leading the section on 40.4 and Georgie on 51.1, putting the team in a strong position ahead of today's final dressage competitors.

RESULTS

CCI:** Mr Tomtom (Dirk Schrade, Ger), Sam I Am III (Paul Sims, Gbr), Majas Hope (Pippa Funnell, Gbr)

CICO:** Billy The Biz (Pippa Funnell, Gbr), So Is Et (Andreas Ostholt, Ger), Bayro (Tim Lips, Ned)

CCI*: Caja 20 (Willa Newton, Gbr), Jenga (Claire Fielding, Gbr), Call Me Honey (Dirk Schrade, Ger)