

Top marks for the Interschools Final.

Equestrian Interschools Ireland closed their season last Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> April with a very well supported Championship show in Wexford Equestrian Centre, where Orla Roche and her team supported by EII personnel put on a great range of classes. It was great to be able to run the final after COVID put a stop to the 2020 final, which meant that a number of enthusiastic riders never got to attend a final as they were in their sixth year. Cathy Kavanagh from Borris VS was in a similar position this year as she missed out in attending the final due to an accident at a recent show. The Kavanagh family have been loyal supporters of Interschools over the past number of years Cathy along with her brother, sister and cousins have been an institution in Borris VS teams. Indeed, there were a lot of riders in their sixth year competing on Sunday and EII wish them well in their future equestrian endeavours. Also present and helping on the day was ex pupil Meabh Byrne at reception and her mother Patrice on call up duty. Course builder Pat Peare built inviting tracks in both the outdoor and indoor arenas and action got under way at 9am, with action in the indoor continuing to past 8pm.

Action kicked off in the Indoor arena with the EII novice team championship class which was also the decider for the Mountain Horse novice team league. This was won in comprehensive fashion by the team from Newbridge College, which also secured them their first place in the league and a training bursary from HIS along with lots of other prizes. The team members were, Blackwoodland Breeze and Anna Nagle, Salter Imperial Commander and Mia Monaghan, Black Jack ridden by Bonnie O'Neill and Basil Brush ridden by Mai Browne. Taking second on the day was the team from St. Declan's Kilmacthomas Hugo and Darragh Walsh), Dudes Law ridden by Aoife Lenihan, Zeus and Ciara O'Reilly and Annadale Royal Mint ridden by Conor Cusack and this secured them fourth place in the league. Third place went to Bridgetown College. Bridgetown was represented by Sophie Whitehead on Molly, Casey Shields on Silver, TLS Pebbles ridden by Rebecca Cloney and Eoin Carroll on Joey. St Mary's Arklow, East Glendalough and Loreto Wexford claimed the minor places on the day. East Glendalough also secured the runner up slot in the league and Loreto Wexford came third. St. Gerard's Bray won the turnout prize.

The TRI Equestrian Open teams league decider followed, which was decided by a jump off. Two of the team starters ended on zero scores and jumped off for first and second. There was huge excitement when Colaiste Bhríde Carnew represented by All Thorp and Chloe Walsh, Galtee Shadow and Sarah Sheppard, Cara Cave Boy and Cian Byrne and Drummin Pretty Lady ridden by Hannah O'Neill secured the win ahead of Dominican College Wicklow's Crumlane Oscar ridden by Baylee Neville Monamia and Megan Neville, their third sibling Casey Neville on Westbrook Dancer and Slanelough Supremacy and Naoise O'Neill. Five teams jumped off for the remaining placings and Gorey posted the fastest times to take third and fourth place ahead of Borris Vocational School, Presentation Wexford and Wesley College. Blessington Community College were awarded the Best Turned out prize. Gorey's third place was sufficient to secure the school the overall league and a valuable HSI bursary prize as well as TRI equestrian sponsored winners' rugs ahead of Borris Vocational School, Dominican College Wicklow, Colaiste Bhríde Carnew, East Glendalough, Wesley College, Presentation Wexford, Blessington Community College and St. Declan's Kilmacthomas. The top five schools in the league also qualify for the Blue Grass Interschools Championships at the Balmoral Show.

Action continued with the TRI equestrian Individual league decider. Once again Colaiste Bhríde Carnew, represented by Cian Byrne riding Hunter's lodge Puissance was victorious on the day and this pair's consistent performance over the past 26 weeks secured them victory also in the overall league, gaining them a valuable HSI bursary and the TRI equestrian winner's rug. They were also

awarded the turn-out prize. Jessica Flood from Blessington Community College on Lissegan Walter was second on the day with Ruby French Davis on Game Spirit Japica for Rockwell College in third. Kyra Griffin from Blessington Community College riding Don Ho was fourth. Cathy Doyle's fifth place was sufficient to secure her the runner up slot in the league. She was riding Road Side Billy for Borris Vocational School. Third place in the league went to Dominican College Wicklow's Baylee Neville, fourth to Jessica Murphy for Gorey, fifth to Grace Berry from Wesley and Flood's second place on the day moved her up to sixth in the league.

The final decider of the day was a very well supported HSI Premier 110cm Grand Prix final. 29 of the qualified riders lined out to compete for the coveted HSI rugs and bursary prize. 7 of the starters left all the poles up and completed within the time allowed to jump off for the title. The fastest jump off time was posted by Megan Neville riding Mona Mia for Dominican College Wicklow to claim the win ahead of Ballyknock Hollywood ridden by Jazmine Arthur for East Glendalough in second and Gorey's Naomi Doyle on Parc na Ruarc in third. Arthur also claimed fourth place, this time partnering All that Jazz. Jessica Murphy, Aibidh Condren and Emily Crawford filled the remaining placings. Murphy also claimed the turnout prize.

The outdoor arena, meanwhile, played host to the Primary Team Championship in the morning and the eventual winners were the team from Screen NS, Mary Kate Kelly on Molly, An Capaill ridden by Shannon Griffith, Ellen Cash on SHL little Rocket, and Aoife Griffith on WNDA Toby (Aoife Griffith) who were four seconds faster than the Kilmore Green team, Beau and Isabelle Bates, Shannon and Lily Walsh, Hardingville Lightening ridden by Anna Sarsfield and Archie ridden by Hannah Rose Roche) in second place. Kilmore also took third place and the Kilmore white team was made up of Ciara Sarsfield on Jimmy, Donnacha Cousins riding Mouse, Blue Bell and Ruby Cousins and completing the cousins' line-up, Ted riding Kaiser.

This was followed by the 55cm Championship class and it proved a very enjoyable competition for all concerned. Cian Cusack riding Thierry Henri for Scoil Mhuire Butlerstown won this class and also claimed the overall primary individual turnout prize. Scoil Diarmuida's Maya White on Pippy was second and fellow schoolmate Anna Curry on Dolly was third.

The 70cm Championship Class followed and this class was the decider for the EII Primary Interschools league, with the league winner receiving a training bursary from HSI along with a much-coveted EII rug and sash. Indeed, HSI provided bursaries for the other EII leagues and also for the final of the two qualified rider classes for which EII is very grateful. The 70cm class on the day was won by Aoife Murphy from Our Lady's Island riding Phoebe ahead of Lucy Stafford on Teddy for Kilraine NS and Isla Coad on The Wow Cow for St. Saviours Ns. Stafford's second place was enough to secure her first place in the league with Coad coming a close second and Murphy in third.

The 80cm Championship class was open to both Secondary and Primary riders. Lucy Darby riding Darkley for Tynock NS posted the fastest time to claim victory ahead of Rockwell College's Harry Barton on El Caballo Gris in second and St Marys, Naas representative Alexandra Butler riding Carrig Dun in third.

The big class of the day in the outdoor arena was the Equieire EII final and this was an extremely well supported class with over 40 combinations that had qualified over the past school year entered. Equieire provided wonderful prizes for first to sixth and there was a beautiful branded rug for the winner, Newbridge College's Mia Browne riding Basil Brush. Sarah Boyle Donoghue for Ardscoil Rathangan riding Four Mile Boy was runner up ahead of Joe Cadam from Cnoc Mhuire Granard on

Knockagaron Fear Bui Falcon in third. Fourth, fifth and sixth went to Niamh Tobin, Jamie Browne and Sophie Boyle, while the turn out prize was awarded to Conor Cusack.

Whilst EII events are over now until September, there is still the Balmoral Blue Grass Interschools Championships to look forward to on May 14<sup>th</sup> when the five qualified Southern Irish teams will take on the five qualified Northern Irish teams to be crowned champions. At the last running of this class in 2019 victory went to the south when Newbridge College claimed the honours.