

Report on the Interschools Final:

The Final of the TRI Equestrian Interschools league took place at the weekend in Mullingar Equestrian Centre which brings to a culmination the 30 week league. With over 40 schools taking part in the league and another 150 schools taking part in the Novice and Primary competitions throughout the year Equestrian Interschools Ireland were very excited about the results of all the competitions held on the day.

After a super jump off Borris Vocational School claimed comprehensive victory in the TRI Equestrian Interschools League Team Final, whilst Caragh Sweeney from Newbridge swept the leader board in the TRI Individual League and Kirstie Connole from St Gerard's won the HSI sponsored 110 class at the TRI sponsored Equestrian Interschools Ireland league final which took place on the 8th April in Mullingar Equestrian Centre.

There was a large turnout, with entries up in all classes and Mullingar's Dorothy Fagan and all her staff must be commended on a very efficiently run show. A day of beautiful spring weather ensured that everyone was in good spirits and a most enjoyable day was had by all. There was exciting action in three arenas and as well as the TRI Open league and HSI 110 finals, novice and primary team Championship classes were held. Also on offer were Individual classes from 50cm up to 90cm for the novice and primary school riders which were sponsored by Mullingar Equestrian.

The main events were held in the International Arena where Seamus Casey and Robert Fagan had built a very inviting if technical track. Event one was the Open Team Championship, which incorporated the TRI sponsored league final. TRI provided the league prizes which were supplemented by HSI and EII sponsored Bursary prizes. Also on offer were qualifying slots for the Inaugural Interschools Championships to be held at the Balmoral show in May. These would be awarded to the top six schools in the League following the final. The generous prize for the winning team on the day was provided by 5 Star Transport which was the transport of the winning team to compete at the Hickstead Interschools Championships in July.

The competition was hotly contested with nearly all the leading schools represented and the line-up included the winning team from the Northern Ireland league held in Meadows Equestrian Centre. Five teams made it through to the jump off round and in the end the League leaders Borris Vocational School cemented their hold on the league by claiming the win on the day. Borris was represented by Catherine Kavanagh riding Coppenagh Blitz, Tomas Kearney on Newtown Harry Barry, and James Kavanagh on Tankardstown Gold dust and Tadhg Kearney riding Fanta M. Just pipped into second place was the team from St Kieran's Kilkenny, James McOwan on Sodar's Lad, Ciaran Byrne on Cuffesgrange Boomerang, Seamus Hughes Kennedy riding Keating's Hunky Dory and Hugh McOwan riding Abbaghmore Boom Odyssey which also secured St Kieran's second place in the league. Third place and fifth in the league went to Wesley College. Wesley College was represented by Tilly Shaw and Bushmill's Fionn, Pippa Durham and Jim Delaney, Holly Micklem on Sunny Girl and Hi Heaven ridden by Sam Micklem. Newbridge College took fourth place in the competition on the day and third overall in the League. The Newbridge team was Ballydavid Sous ridden by Max Ross, Nika Carey and Shanroe Scorpion, Anna Lise Cullen with Jackeroo and Charlie O'Dwyer and B-Boda Bailey. Down High school riders, Alex Cleland on Rafa Smash, Jessica Nelson and Murphy, Charlotte Leslie riding Marcaigh Star and Charles Vinaccia on Derry Mac made the most of their long trip down to take fifth place.

St Gerard's blue team riders Shona Callan on Dudley Do Right, Jennifer Robinson on My Jasper, Kirstie Connole and Zazu Von Terhofstede and Mark Finnerty on Emma, was the best of the rest of the field to claim sixth and this assured St Gerards fifth place in the league. Although not placed on the day The King's Hospital's league standing earned them sixth place in the league and the final qualifying spot for Balmoral. Newbridge College, won the Turnout League and the Attendance league.

The Open Individual Championship saw 22 of the 45 starters qualify for the jump off round. Daniel Fitzgerald riding Erbees Corvette for Newbridge College denied fellow pupil Caragh Sweeney on Kippure Steepleview Jack of the win on the day, but Sweeney's second place cemented her position in the Individual league assuring her of the League win. Hugh McOwan on Annaghmore Boom Odyssey was third ahead of Mark Finnerty on All Action for St Gerards. Cathal Duffy riding Ballyengland Regal from Calasanctus was fifth with Charlotte Leslie on Star from Down High in sixth. Leslie also claimed the turn out prize. The other league placings based on points went to Georgie Connolly Carew in second, Ciaran Byrne in third, Leah Ross in fourth, Mark Finnerty, fifth and Pippa Durham in sixth.

The final competition in the International Arena was the HSI sponsored 110 Class. 35 of the qualified combinations lined out for this of which 11 made it through to the jump off round. Nearly last to go St Gerards rider Kirstie Connole riding Zazu Van Terhofstede shaved seconds off her nearest rival to claim victory. This was an especially sweet win for Connole who has been a regular Interschools competitor as this is her final year. J Naughton riding Star Appraisal claimed runner up position ahead of Mark Finnerty riding All Action for St Gerard's. Anna Mooney on Dexter Leam Prancer from Presentation Tuam was fourth ahead of Leah Heffernan on My Rockstown Two from Newbridge College in fifth and Theo Van Cauwenberge riding Esano for Maynooth in sixth. Leah Heffernan also won the turnout prize.

Meanwhile, elsewhere the Novice Team Championship was won in fine style by Northern Ireland visitors from Ballymena Academy, Alex Byrne on Forest Lodge, Myah McClean riding Minnie Manice Justice, Zoe Dickey on Danny and Alex Henry McCool on Pippa. Second place went to the team from Ballymahon Vocational, Grace and Emer Esler riding Newman and Elliot's Point, Shane's Lad ridden by Darragh Whyte and Abel Star and Edel Whyte. Assumption Grammar School took third place. Lucy Savage on Knockash Willis, Ella Kincaid on Lismahon Houdini Zara Burns on Flapjack and Emily Stewart riding Calyco Jack made up that team. Fourth place went to Presentation Athenry, followed by Newbridge College and Oakland's.

Northern Ireland also featured in the Primary Teams with East Antrim NS winning the competition and The Mighty Midgets in second place. The combined team from St Andrews and Castlepark came third ahead of local school Gael Scoil An Mhuliin, Kildangan NS and St Tolas.

In the Individual classes the 90 cm went to Megan Nelson riding Balnashallor for High School Ballynahinch with Bright Eyes, Katie Dolan from Rochfortbridge in second and Kippure Little Big Chief ridden by Launa McCann for Hollywood NS in third. Thomas Patton riding Sugar from Holy Family NS won the 80cm class. The 70cm class went to Freya Sayle on Fenagbeg Forever for St Bricin's Belturbet. The 60cm and 50cm classes were enjoyed by all competitors and all clear rounds received rosettes and prizes.

Equestrian Interschools Ireland, represented by Helen O'Neill, Yvonne Byrne and Alyssa O'Neill thank everyone for the support of the League especially our 865 members and our main League sponsors TRI Equestrian and look forward to seeing everyone again next September.

