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**Emma Stoker** after landing the ladies' championship at high speed with 13-year-old China Blue



Emma Stoker, 18, lands the ladies' title with her birthday present, China Blue

**SMALLMAN LADIES' CHAMPIONSHIP**  
**1st** China Blue (E Stoker)  
**2nd** Winner IV (L Saywell)  
**3rd** Ominerale Courcelle (A van Essen)



'He jumped his socks off': Sam Hutton and Astral 57

**KOMPEET GENTS' CHAMPIONSHIP**  
**1st** Astral 57 (S Hutton)  
**2nd** Thesaura (M Armstrong)  
**3rd** Pieter VI (J Hughes)

## Highs and lows for John Whitaker

### HIGH POINTS

- ▲ "Taking second in the grand prix on Catwalk"
- ▲ "Being beaten in the grand prix by my daughter Louise"
- ▲ "It was late Saturday night, but so many people stayed to watch the grand prix. It was good to see the arena packed and made a fabulous atmosphere"



### LOW POINTS

- ▼ "Failing to qualify Catwalk for the HOYS seven- and eight-year-old"
- ▼ "It was my aim for this show. I was clear but too slow! But coming second in the grand prix made up for it"
- ▼ "Catwalk again — stopping at the final fence in the gents' jump-off cost me the title"

"They were fast, I didn't think I'd done enough and I was shocked at how fast I was!" said Emma, who considered the last line the pivotal factor. "I kept my turns tight and got a good shot to the [penultimate] triple bar and took a stride out to the last."

A technical first-round track proved stronger as it progressed, catching out several on the final line of Cushionbed wall to the combination.

"It was really strong," said Emma. "Horses backed off the wall, making the dog-leg to the combination difficult."

The Ircolando 13-year-old China Blue, originally owned by Carron Nicol, joined Yorkshire-based Emma 18 months ago and was later bought as an 18th birthday present.

The partnership, Olympia young

rider contenders, has stepped up this year, tackling Great Yorkshire's famous Cock o' the North.

"We just had the last fence down so I was pleased," said Emma, who is looking towards 2012. "I want to move up the ranking list and get to some good shows."

### Astral orbits in gents' champ

THE gentlemen tackled a similar track, but jump-off clears proved impossible as the now sizeable track took its toll, with both double and triple bar proving influential.

Mark Armstrong took an early lead, but the back bar on the big oxer coming out of the double caught his ride, Thesaura. Nonetheless, the lead was short-lived as Sam Hutton — making the same mistake — eased the Aljansired Astral 57 into a 0.14sec lead for the Kompeet gents' title.

James Hughes hit the final planks for third on Pieter VI, but sympathies lay with last-to-go Geoff Luckett, who aimed for a clear to win on Old Lodge's R Little Lefanie.

Lefanie showed her scope over the double, but dropped her back legs on the triple bar's middle rail, resulting in fifth position.

"She's never done that before," said Geoff. "In hindsight, I should have pressed more into the triple bar, but I was thinking of the planks to follow."

Sam also considered the course to be technical.

"It was big in the jump-off," he said. "But Astral's on form — he jumped his socks off in the 1.40m qualifier the day before and was amazing again here." H&H

## 'Gut-busting' bogey fence

NEW fences are usually a feature in the Cushionbed grand prix, but the florally-decorated baby-pink castle (top left) with resident Loch Ness monster or the pelham-shaped fence caused few problems.

However, in the Kompeet gents' championship, a vertical-to-oxer double in the jump-off was the talking point (below).

"It was a gut-buster," said Geoff Luckett. "Lefanie gave her all over it and panicked over the [following] triple bar, dropping her back legs before snatching them back."

Winner Sam Hutton was a victim — Astral hitting the back bar of the oxer coming out.

"In the jump-off it was bigger and wider, and because of the turn you didn't have as much canter as the first round," he said. "Added to a big vertical going in, it was almost impossible to jump out."

