

Queen Elizabeth II Cup Edwards scores on Ladies' Day

Anna Edwards and the springy Unique IX defy their 20-1 odds to land the top accolade for national riders, spearheading lady riders in a fabulous one-two-three

ANNA EDWARDS is only 26, but victory in the prestigious Old Lodge Queen Elizabeth II Cup with Unique IX has elevated her into British showjumping's top tier.

"We've been knocking on the door and, for the past few weeks, I've aimed for this," said an ecstatic Anna, who was part of the winning Nations Cup team in Linz, Austria, in May on the nine-year-old gelding. "This is the biggest class I've won, and he wants to win as much as I do."

On the show's Ladies' Day, 23 starters were whittled down to four by the challenging 1.50m high, 12-fence track, female riders holding the advantage with three finalists.

As first to go, class debutante Anna had the perpetual dilemma of how to play the jump-off game on her own Unique IX. This nine-year-old gelding has a powerful in-built spring that sends him soaring over the biggest obstacles and he showed his class, relishing the big arena.

Bouncing into the double at fence seven, the poles rattled, but Anna sent him motoring thereafter. They flew the last, clear in 52.06sec.

"Dad said not to do anything stupid, just go clear, and Mum told me to keep my head," said Anna, who bought this Dutch-bred Heartbreaker gelding as a five-

year-old. "I got my rhythm to the first fence and kept it."

Next up, local rider Tracy Priest and the nippy little Calle stretched over these cavernous oxers, just nudging a rail at the penultimate fence.

Third of the quartet was Nations Cup team hero Tina Fletcher with her Derby runner-up Promised Land. The 45-year-old mother of two sought out every short-cut and recorded the fastest round of 50.45sec, but with four faults, once again earning her the runner-up spot.

"I feel sorry for the horse — he seems to have been second all year," said Tina. "Promised Land wasn't terribly settled today. He was more settled in the Derby. I think he thought he was going to have to come down the Bank again."

Ireland's David Simpson picked up eight faults on Cruise With Me for fourth.

"This class [which only opened up to both sexes in 2008] is still the big one that all the ladies want to win," said Anna. "I didn't watch any of the other riders, I thought, 'let them beat me!'"

"He's good enough to do 'super leagues' next year, but I've got to get the experience and learn how to handle the pressure. He's eager, bold and loves it all." **H&H**



Anna Edwards, 26, and the big-jumping Unique IX win the prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Cup

QUEEN ELIZABETH II CUP

- 1st Anna Edwards on Unique IX
- 2nd Tina Fletcher on Promised Land
- 3rd Tracy Priest on Calle

Pictures by Trevor Meeks

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