

**Foxhunter**

# Sultan reigns in a vintage year



**An exciting British-bred seven-year-old lifts the coveted *Horse & Hound* Foxhunter trophy, completing a championship double and a hat-trick for owner-breeders Old Lodge**

"I'VE dreamt about riding in the Foxhunter final all my life," said Bruce Menzies, summarising the feelings of most aspiring producers.

But this year he went one step further. Riding Old Lodge's British-bred Sultan V, in what many considered to be one of the strongest fields ever, the coveted *Horse & Hound* Foxhunter championship title became his.

"This is the first time I've had a horse good enough — it's still the one they all want to win," said the 35-year-old from West Sussex.

Twenty-three riders turned out for the gold trophy, which was first contested in 1954. Kelvin Bywater's inviting but challenging 11-fence track produced a brilliant competition with eight making it through to the jump-off.

"It is a fine line getting the course just right," said Kelvin. "It can very quickly go either way in the Foxhunter. So I was pleased — problems were spread all over the place and there was a mixture of short and long distances."

Bruce agreed, adding: "Fence eight [a vertical-oxer double] was



**Seven-year-old Oz De Breve (Laura Renwick) fills the runner-up spot**

a real 'come and get me' fence so I practically walked over the upright before to give Sultan enough time to it."

**A great British entry**

THE eight to go clear included two British-bred horses and *H&H* columnist Graham Fletcher's tip Oz De Breve (Laura Renwick).



Flying the colours for Old Lodge, Bruce Menzies rides a copybook round to win on the imposing Sultan V

- 1st** Sultan V (Bruce Menzies)
- 2nd** Oz De Breve (Laura Renwick)
- 3rd** Tin Tin (Graham Lovegrove)

Drawing the short straw as the jump-off track pioneer was Graham Lovegrove riding his sister Sarah Hancock's Tin Tin, a seven-year-old Cavalier gelding.

Giving the fences plenty of air, this scopey grey was astonishingly quick across the ground, the crowd gasping at the angle he flew over the upright third fence. The Essex rider motored home clear in 37.45sec, good enough for eventual third.

"It was the draw that did it for me — you can never win it from there," he said. "I didn't go as fast as I could have, but I went as fast as I dared for a clear."

Graham hopes Tin Tin, who was bought from Holland as a yearling to be used in a riding school, will go on to do Nations Cups.

Emily Davies finished on six faults with the nine-year-old Traferro — whose sire Ferro had three representatives in the final — then came Laura on Oz De Breve.

Cutting every corner, the Queen's Cup-winning rider reached top gear heading towards the final *Horse & Hound* oxer when the seven-year-old Dollar Du Murier son jinked suddenly. The chestnut had pulled off a shoe at the preceding fence which then flew over their heads to land in a flower pot, causing him to spook. He took off a mile away and did well to jump it, stopping the clock at 35.74sec.

"That lost us a fraction of a second that would have won it," said a clearly gutted Laura, who led until victory was snatched from her by Bruce.

She bought the gelding as an unbroken three-year-old from the same stud as her 2006 winner Limelight De Breve.

"I can't be disappointed with him — he'll start international

classes next year and we'll take him on the Sunshine Tour. He has all the ability."

The next four riders — Henry Turrell (Ahorn Van De Zuuthoeve), Tim Davies (Valentijn O), Daniel Neilson (Iolanthe) and Douglas Duffin with the British-bred Clarius by 2000 winner Marius Claudius — all faulted, so it was down to last-drawn Bruce Menzies and Sultan V.

**Quick off the mark**

BY keeping up the pace round the sharpest of corners, Bruce whizzed over the line 0.15sec faster than Laura on his big grey (who stands 16.3hh, but looks much bigger). They performed a celebratory fly-by to the delight of the owners and crowd, who knew they had just witnessed a potential superstar.

"All year this has been the aim — even last year I thought he'd be the one," said Bruce. "I saw Graham [Lovegrove] take nine strides to the last. William Funnell said, 'Keep it tight and take one [stride] out to the last'. He's careful enough to do that and it worked."

Sultan came to Bruce just-broken as a four-year-old from Old Lodge, for whom Bruce has been riding for five years.

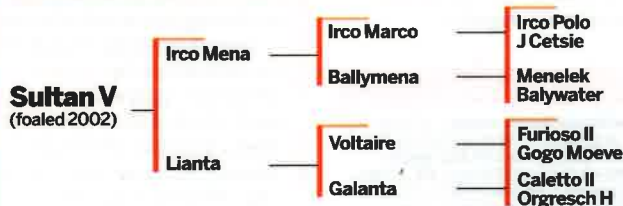
"When I picked him up he had these feathers and a big beard and I thought, 'What is this they are giving me?'" said Peter Charles' former stable jockey. "He could always jump, but he was weak and unbalanced as a five-year-old."

So what's next for the latest addition to the *H&H* Foxhunter roll of honour?

"I'm 35 and haven't got my British flag yet so I want to jump in Nations Cups — I think this will be the horse to take me there," said Bruce.

Could Sultan be the great British hope we've all been waiting for? Watch this space.

**BREEDING OF A CHAMPION**



**HOW PAST WINNERS WERE BRED 2000-09**

