

Fantasia's triumphant return to Britain

SOLIHULL DEVELOPMENT CLASSIC, SOLIHULL RIDING CLUB, KNOWLE, WEST MIDLANDS

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By Suzanne Jones

THE Spanish Armada surrendered to British rule, but Manuel Anon's challenge could not be defeated as the Spanish 17-year-old swept to grand prix victory on Fantasia.

The mare was produced in England by Carron Nicol and won nationally and internationally — including two HOYS 2008 victories for Billy Twomey — before being sold to Manuel in April. Fantasia immediately won for her new rider and they are bang on-form with two victories at the recent Barcelona meeting.

Here for a pre-Horse of the Year (HOYS) run under the guidance of trainer and former Olympic rider Rowland Fernyhough, the partnership had already shown form by heading Thursday's 1.40m.

"The NEC arena is a similar size so this show was ideal," said Rowland, who now has this Noncorde nine-year-old firing on all cylinders. "She was slightly anaemic in Barcelona — she'd have won four classes otherwise."

From a 26, 15 gained grand prix jump-off access despite course-designer David Cole's technical questions.

Helen Tredwell looked in a commanding position as her opener on Opportunity B was superseded only by second ride Naomi V. However, she was no match for Manuel in the final draw and the deceptively fast Fantasia gained an almost 2sec advantage.

Teenager Manuel — 2008 junior European champion and young rider team gold and individual bronze medallist this year — has to fit his show jumping around school.

He finds Fantasia "easy and rideable," but adds: "She is still young so I will keep her at 1.50m level for now, and aim for bigger things next year."

'The best I've sat on'
CROWNED grade B and C
Champion at Hickstead this year,
Old Lodge's impressive Super

En route to HOYS, Manuel Anon, 17, and the deceptively quick Fantasia pick up a valuable grand prix win



'I haven't lost my touch': new mum Emma-Jo Slater wins the winter novice with five-year-old Inky



Trooper De Ness will defend his title in 2010 after effortlessly negotiating the tightest lines to head Solihull's qualifying class for Nicky Boulter.

"He's without doubt the best I've sat on," said Nicky, at her first show for two months with this Vigo D'Arsoilles son. "It's as though he's never been away."

Nicky's biggest disappointment with the scopey stallion is missing

out on Foxhunter qualification. But Trooper goes straight to stud after HOYS and will be aimed at area trials next year.

"He's advanced for his age [seven] and is coping so well at this level. I don't think area trials will be any problem," said Nicky.

Of the 54 starters, 28 reached the jump-off, but they faced an uphill task chasing Nicky's early lead, with Mark Bunting's

late flyer on UB. One the closest.

Produced by owner Shayla McNulty for the past three years under trainer Mark's guidance, this seven-year-old with Concorde bloodlines has been ridden by Mark for two months.

The 17.1hh has a ground-eating stride and was second in the previous night's 1.40m.

"He's inexperienced at this level, but has a great brain and is unbelievably careful," said Mark, who will hand the reins back to Shayla, 18, in 2010 for young rider classes.

Umorkus heads 73 entries

WITH the winter grade C final now at the British Open, there was a surge of entries and 40 of the original 73 jumped off. The class was claimed by a late round from Louise Pavitt on Umorkus.

"He doesn't look fast, but covers the ground," said Louise, who practised jump-off turns on the Good Times eight-year-old before coming here. "It worked."

Keen amateur and owner Emma Harrison shares the ride "but he's moved up and outgrown me, so I'll