**Leinster TREC TRI Equestrian MA/PTV League.**

The lovely Derby Arena at Castlewarden Horse and Pony Club, Co Kildare, was the venue for Leg 2 of the TRI Equestrian Leinster TREC MA/PTV League, 2016. On a fine and sunny morning, Sunday, 24th April, a total of 23 riders and horses arrived to walk the course and prepare for the experience of competing on a grass surface, a big change from the previous arena-based events of early in the year.

The ground was in wonderful condition and the Organisers had included a great variety of TREC Obstacles, putting the existing Derby obstacles and the lie of the land to great use to plan a course that was both fun and technical to ride.

The competition started with the MA corridor of 50m laid out in the adjacent tree lined arena. Riders then immediately headed towards the Derby Field via a connecting grassy lane to start the PTV course.

For the Open level, the course started in that grassy lane, with 2 onward bound obstacles- a Ditch and a Tree Trunk. Out then to the open Derby field to see a Rein-back right in front, to test control of rider and horse. Forward then to the Slalom and Low Branches. Horses were ready now for the Path Crossing which comprised a jump up onto a bank and down off it… BUT only 3 strides in front was a drop into water! So riders had to be prepared and ready to turn their horse immediately or risk a ducking! Luckily, no one had that experience.

Next followed a set of very well placed obstacles…. The Mounted Immobility within a grassy circle of bushes, the Water Crossing with a related difficulty of stepping up out of it, and the Footbridge which was laid out on top of a mound so that horses had to approach up a rise and descend immediately after.

Onward again to the Hedge, beautifully decorated with yellow Gorse flowers and bushy branches and then the S-bend – also well placed on top of a mound so that riders had to prepare the horse to steady for it. Then came the last of the ridden obstacles, the One-handed Figure of Eight just after riders came down from the mound, so again preparation was the key.

After this, riders dismounted for the last four Led Obstacles, first through the Horsebox, then back again to the S-bend and back over the Footbridge. The final obstacle was Mounting and this was a real challenge, since the natural bank at the edge of the grassy field was part of the circle! Riders could use this as the ‘mounting block’ if they needed one and careful placing and obedient horses was the key here! Then riders left the field through the nearby gate to their horseboxes, a fitting finish to a well thought-out and enjoyable course.

The Intermediate and Novice levels followed much the same course and challenges, the main differences starting with a Ridden Corridor rather than a Ditch for the first Obstacle and the Tree Trunk and other ‘jumps’ being relatively lower according to the rules.

The Open class was won by Niamh O’Huid and her handsome Ser Kai, who clearly enjoyed the Ditch and Tree Trunk start to the course but also obediently listened to his rider as he negotiated the rest of the obstacles, TREC being a relatively new challenge to this ex-eventer. Liz Burbage won the Intermediate class, continuing her success with The General’s Daughter, a lovely cob with whom she clearly has a great relationship. The Novice class was won by Minna Junnikkala, riding Cocky. Minna is quite new to TREC but has made a great start and Cocky, who has had success in the past with Louise Parkhill, made a willing partner and together they completed the course to include a fantastic set of twelve ‘10s’ for the obstacles as well as the highest score of the day, 58 points, for the MA.

Well done to all competitors and grateful thanks to the Proprietor, Jane Foley, of Castlewarden and to the Organisers, Rosemarie Bryson and Trish Young for a very well run and thoroughly enjoyable event.

For Results, see Leinster TREC’s Results page and Facebook.

For photos of the day, see Leinster TREC’s Facebook page and James Keown Photography’s Leinster TREC album.