



Tremendous Success of British Riding Club's First National Virtual Dressage Championships for 2020 and 2021

This year British Riding Clubs (BRC) ran the BRC SEIB Novice Winter Dressage Championships & the BRC HorseHage & Mollichaff Intermediate Winter Dressage Championships for both 2020 and 2021 as Virtual Championships events from Wednesday 26 April to Sunday 2 May 2021.

BRC streamed these virtual championships on their Facebook page, with over 14 hours of competition shown. Featuring the top three riders in each of the 58 separate arenas, totalling 174 dressage tests, ranging from Intro (Walk & Trot) to Advanced Medium, for both junior and senior teams and individuals. These videos, have received over 6,600 views.

“This has been a huge undertaking and the whole team worked incredibly well to ensure a seamless production for our riding club members. In all we had over 1,250 entries, running across the 58 arenas, with 29 dressage judges marking the all-important tests, giving great feedback to the riders. We are thrilled to have been able to run this competition for those riders who had already qualified and hope that everyone enjoyed taking part, we saw some fabulous arenas and backdrops which we would not normally get to see.

This is certainly one of the largest virtual equestrian competitions we are aware of.” Rachael Hollely-Thompson, Head of BRC

Following the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 BRC SEIB Insurance Brokers Novice Winter Championships and BRC Horsehage & Mollichaff Intermediate Winter Championships due to the Covid pandemic, BRC set to work hosting these virtual championships for those riders who had already qualified across the UK in their respective dressage classes.

SEIB Marketing Manager, Nicolina MacKenzie said: “We are always delighted to be involved in supporting grassroots riders and their horses and helping them have opportunities to further their riding knowledge and skills. The BRC SEIB Insurance Brokers Novice Winter Virtual Dressage Championships has seen some great performances and we hope the championship has helped give people the confidence to now get out competing successfully in person.”

“We would like to congratulate everyone who competed in the BRC HorseHage & Mollichaff Intermediate Winter Virtual Dressage Championships 2020 & 2021 and a big thank you to everyone who made the virtual event happen, it is clear that it was a great success with some strong competition.

“We are very proud to be able to support BRC through this sponsorship and recognise the importance of this organisation to the grass roots rider. We look forward to working with the team at BRC in the future.” said Chris Tar of HorseHage & Mollichaff.

Below is a selection of some of the outstanding overall achievements from both individuals and teams taking part in the 2020 and 2021 Novice and Intermediate Winter Dressage Championships. Full results can be found on the following BRC website page

- <http://www.bhs.org.uk/enjoy-riding/british-riding-clubs/brc-championships/brc-online-championships>. All top three arena videos can be viewed on the BRC YouTube channel
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzaas6xU4L0iOopWESBBkwA>

Davinia Kickham riding Divine San Siro from Atherstone & District RC lifted the overall Senior Novice 2020 title, with a score of 75.25%. "Having competed in the BRC Christmas Cracker event last year, I would like to say that my partner is now a seasoned professional at videoing and introducing myself and Divine San Siro (aka Jeffery). Getting all dressed up and plaited and even remembering the test created the nerves (well for me perhaps not Jeff). Thank you for the opportunity to compete and for not missing out on us competing at the Championships (safely) and to all the judges that have watched our videoing efforts, I am sure that there are some fabulous outtakes and some inadvertent stars."

The overall winner of the Junior Novice Winter Championships 2020 was Lilly Tailby riding Humbug from Misterton & District RC, finishing on a score of 76.20%.

"I just wanted to thank you and the sponsors for my amazing rosettes and sashes that I have received after winning my classes at the virtual dressage championships. They are lovely along with the amazing bridle from The Saddlers Company, for winning the overall junior individual novice championship. I'm over the moon with my results this year and couldn't have asked any more from my lovely boy Humbug who produced two amazing tests.

It's our first year being part of BRC and have really enjoyed what we've been able to take part in despite lockdown. Looking forward now to many more BRC activities now that things are moving again. Thank you all again for your hard work to enable us all to still compete during the tough times last year." Lilly Tailby and Humbug.

Rother Valley RC junior teams were placed both 1st (on an excellent team score of 4) and 3rd (team score of 11) in the Junior Intermediate Winter Championships 2020. "As Team Manager, I consider myself incredibly lucky to work with a great bunch of supportive parents and hardworking, talented riders as well as the backing of a great club and committee. All combinations pulled off excellent tests. As lovely as it is to represent your club at a Championship in any form, the virtual route takes away the team camaraderie, the excitement of a road trip and there were no chips, cake or gin for the Team Manager! That said, seeing your team mate up on screen, waiting for the results was a great way to give some drama to the proceedings. I take my hat off to every team manager; The work involved collating paperwork and YouTube links was phenomenal." Caroline Morris, Rother Valley RC Junior Team Manager

Kate Heap from Billericay & District RC, winner of the Medium D25 and overall individual mixed Pick A Test winner for 2021, on a score of 74.85% said, "San Francisco PR had a major stifle operation 18 months ago and his recovery was very slow and then Covid struck, so we haven't really had an opportunity to test how the joint will hold up under the strain put on a competition horse until this Championship. I found the experience of taking part in an online test very different to the norm! Cisco is quite a laid-back horse and I rely upon the atmosphere of a new venue and other horses to give him that 'razzle dazzle' we all strive for in competition but this time there was none of that. It was lovely to have the excuse to get him all dressed up and in the show attire, it gave us a real purpose and boost to our daily training. As a dressage rider, we strive for perfection and it was very hard to do a test and then watch it back and feel positive because let's face it, there is normally always room for improvement! I finished our recording with much better appreciation of how to use our arena

and heightened ring craftsmanship, which one would not have developed so much, if one had just gone to a venue and ridden the test once! BRC have gone above and beyond to try to make this Championship as exciting as possible, with online streaming and my riding club Billericay & District RC have been so supportive and helpful throughout all the rounds of the competition!"

Saffron Walden & District RC senior team were victorious in the Senior Novice Dressage 2021, finishing on a team score of 8. Claire Engelmann, Team Manager said, "Due to the 2021 qualifiers also being run virtually, we lost a few of our usual campaigners who did not have access to an arena and were not allowed to travel to one during the lockdown. We had some members submitting 3 or 4 different tests to the championships, at one point they were very busy filming their 2021 qualifier tests and 2020 championship tests all at the same time. I thought it was going to be an administrative nightmare, but credit to all SWDRC team members, everything was submitted to me as requested, which meant I could send one cohesive document to BRC with all links in one go."

Flitch Way RC junior team won the 2021 Novice Winter Championships, with a total of 16 points. Rosie Bates, Team Manager for Flitch Way RC says "Flitch Way RC was founded in 2020 and we are immensely proud to have attended our second Championships so far. With this time our Junior Team representing FWRC in the Novice Dressage Championships 2021, producing yet another great result at championship level. The team consisting of Ruby Mae Morgan, Imogen Pohl, Poppy McDonald & Mia McDonald all rode superb tests on their ponies and horses to produce brilliant scores.

Thank you to BRC for continuing to run the National Winter Dressage Championships, albeit having to make it online due to the forever changing restrictions it still meant whatever the circumstances we could have a championships to work towards, attend and be able to enjoy competing our horses with friends virtually, for that we are very grateful for a well ran online Championships."

BRC would like to thank our sponsors SEIB Insurance Brokers and HorseHage & Mollichaff for their continued support and for providing the wonderful prizes, rosettes and sashes. And also a huge thank you to all the fabulous dressage judges, who embraced these virtual championships, marking a vast numbers of online tests in a very short space of time.