

Lisa hopping for glory at horse trials

JOHN CARUANA



LEADING CONTENDER: Lisa Pilbeam on Cullawn Holly

By Roland Clarke

ETCHINGHAM eventer Lisa Pilbeam heads to Eridge Horse Trials near Tunbridge Wells this weekend as the front runner in the 2007 South East Eventers League (SEEL) on her eight-year-old mare Cullawn Celtic Queen, known as 'Lady'.

Pilbeam, who recently turned 21, will be aiming to continue her consistent form this season with Lady, which has brought them three consecutive wins at the last three SEEL events culminating with the Under 21 Intermediate Novice at Borde Hill last month.

She said: "Borde Hill was useful as the cross-country was challenging and had loads of skinnies and combinations." With its intermediate dressage and showjumping the intermediate-novice was good preparation for their first intermediate run five days later in Norfolk where they were second with a double clear showjumping and cross-country.

Two weeks later Pilbeam pulled off another novice win, although there are 16 remaining until the season ends in October.

Cullawn Holly. They finished on their dressage score, as in their four previous intro and pre-novice wins, including their very first outing together.

At Eridge on Sunday Lady will again tackle an intermediate although they will face strong opposition including Sweden's Anna Hilton (Sandhurst, Kent) on David Ashby's Lester De La Pree who won the main Intermediate Novice at Borde Hill and are just five points behind in SEEL's Leading Horse & Rider rankings. At stake is a £2,000 Devoucoux saddle for the season's winner.

Pilbeam and Lady also have a six point lead in the Bill Kear Arenas and Gallops Owner Riders in which she is third on Holly who also heads the Equilquest Novices! They are also first and second in the Team Opposition Mares and first and fourth in the Lodge Farm Under 21 Riders. So a strong showing at the first eight League events has put them well in contention for a

share of the £7,000 prize-fund although there are 16 remaining until the season ends in October.

Pilbeam who has 10 horses of her own in the yard she runs at Stonegate, bought the two mares in Ireland from breeder Shane Foley along with her five-year-old gelding Cullawn Celtic King who will be doing his first pre-novice at Eridge.

Although most of the horses are being brought on to sell, Pilbeam plans to keep Lady and breed from her when the mare retires.

For now she is aiming Lady for a three-day event later this year and Holly for the PAVO 6-year-old Breeding Championships in October and possibly an intermediate if she is ready. However, having proved her burgeoning talent Pilbeam deserves some rides for other owners and needs a sponsor. For now the encouragement and nurturing is down to her dressage trainer Liz West, her mother Tina Pilbeam who trains her for jumping - and used to event herself - plus her father Mick who is the competitive drive.

Lisa says: "I really love doing it and it's fun. It's nice to win but I would pull out if the ground was hard and I needed to save Lady's legs. She's not fussed about the going but doesn't like it sticky so I was surprised at how well she went at Borde Hill."

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which runs throughout both days from 10am.

Saturday sees Pre-novices in action along with the KBIS Junior Regional Novices and on Sunday there is the Open Intermediate, Intermediate, Dodson and Horrell Novice Regional Final and various Novices.

For sporting action come to Eridge tomorrow (Saturday) and Sunday Entrance including all occupants is just £10 per car or £5 for concessions. Further information: 01892 783227.

Set in the picturesque Eridge Park, this crucial event offers wonderful viewing of the exciting cross-country phase,