



HRCV top Teams Trophy Horse Trials are back and wasn't it just the BEST weekend. Hosted by Smythesdale ARC at the picturesque Woody Yaloak Equestrian Centre , the TTT Horse Trials were a resounding success . There was a very tangible feel good vibe about the grounds with so many smiling happy competitors and crews, many sporting the trendy burgundy and black TTT merchandise .

I think we can speak for all clubs who have come before us, hosting a Top Teams Trophy Horse Trials event, especially for the first time, is a huge undertaking!

Running an event in the middle of a global pandemic, created challenges for all of us. OC, judges and competitors alike. COVID-19 regulations and the chance of snap lockdowns was something we had never had to consider before. The thought of our event being cancelled with a moment's notice was always looming, however the organizing committee at Smythesdale did not let this dampen our spirits. We forged full steam ahead with fingers crossed and an ear to the daily Covid numbers. A community grant from Buninyong and District Community Bank allowed us to proceed with some confidence, knowing that if the worst happened, we would not be at risk of a large financial loss.

For those of you who haven't (yet) visited our grounds at the Woody Yaloak Equestrian Centre (WYEC) they are quite impressive, only made better by the many hours spent manicuring the cross-country course across numerous working bees. Chainsaws were yielded, sledge hammers swung, mowers mowed, whipper snippers tidied, weeds chipped, jumps moved and pegged and many tractor loads of mulch and footings were laid out to ensure the going was as good as we could offer. We can't take all the credit, of course, Mother Nature played a role in the presentation of the grounds with lush green grass and going that was the best it's ever been. It was just perfect! Recent rain also meant that our small creek crossings were flowing well, which I'm sure had a few competitors a little concerned as they were walking their courses. But it did afford good practice before the real challenge of the water complex.

The reduced numbers which allowed the traditional format of all dressage on Saturday and all cross country on Sunday, made for a fabulous event. The competition kicked off with the riders turned out beautifully in club colours with horses washed , plaited ready to perform at their tip top best. Judges and pencillers dived head first in the deep end with electronic *live scoring* on tablets. A first for HRCV competition. Riders were able to access their dressage scores and comments within minutes of finishing their test! The BIG advantage of the contact free format was not having to have sheet collectors run the dressage tests back to the office. Scores were uploaded instantaneously to the office computer, making the scorers job that much more efficient.

Technology is just fantastic, and I am sure the use of tablets for dressage and for the jumping phases will become the norm in HRCV as time goes on.



Hygain had sponsored not only the Best Dressage and Best Presented in every section, but had vouchers for the top 10 dressage scores. These could be redeemed over the weekend at their impressive trade stall....and gosh did that make for some happy competitors.

The first show jumping course was ridden only hours after the dressage commenced, and ran over the 2 full days of competition. Ian Box had designed a tricky but fair course befitting a Top Teams event, which managed to change some scores around over the course of the weekend. The showjumping course provided a great backdrop to our trade village complete with shopping and food vans over the weekend. Is it any surprise that the mobile cocktail bar, 'The Sipping Sparrow' had sold out of cocktail ingredients within hours of announcing 'Happy Hour' on Saturday evening?

As the sun rose on Sunday, those who were up early for the cross-country briefing and complementary egg and bacon roll, were treated to a short but moving Anzac Day service attended by two members of the Creswick Light Horse Troop. Nikki and Mark - both ride OTT Standardbred's, Mako and Digger, re-trained for their Lighthorse duties.

Cross country was underway bang on time at 9am under the watchful eye of Troy Best our course controller. The course rode extremely well with one rider describing it more like an 'adventure park' than a cross country course. The creek crossings enabled horses to get a taste of the water, and a hoof wetting paddle early on, before having to tackle the water jump for real. The terrain itself provided so much variety, up and over small rises, through bushland, down the 'Man from Snowy River' hill as one aspect of the course was described. On through the 'gold mine', water complex and finishing on the flat with a gallop over the imposing ditch and brush fences before a quick grassy gallop home and over the final 'Poppy box' fence and through those all important finish flags. The course was just brilliant with close to maximum distance and jumping efforts in all levels.

There were plenty of awards and prizes on offer thanks to the generous support of our sponsors. The prize giving came thick and fast as the jumping phases were completed. An entire pallet of Barastoc Supreme feed donated by the fantastic crew at the Haymarket had many riders going home with a bag of feed and so many other goodies. Imagine when our horses work out they can win FEED!!!!

The heartiest of congratulations must go to the four members of the Bendigos United winning team. Father and son Tony and Kian Blanchard on Easy and Ace of BDFEG combined with Rebecca Eaton on Mount William Hinley and Alison McDiarmid on Dominion Park Lawson, of Bendigo and District ARC to take out the TOP TEAM TROPHY. The beautiful burgundy woollen rugs, sponsored by Skye Park rugs, looked superb on the Bendigo Combined winning team horses.

So many wonderful stories emerged of the winning combinations in all sections and special awards including best performed OTT thoroughbred, best performed Standardbred and Clydie Cross, as well as the inaugural world first Muddy Mayhem award, highlighted the diversity in breeds which compete in our exciting and ever challenging sport. It really was a Top Teams Trophy competition to remember.

All in all, the 2021 TTT Horse Trials event was a raving success! The number of riders and spectators who went out of their way to give positive feedback to all the Smythesdale members dotted around the event just affirmed how much everyone was enjoying themselves and it certainly gave the organizing committee a spring in their step right when we needed it! ... Thank you 😊

The 2021 TTT HT Organising Committee

Smythesdale ARC