

# Arena Challenge sees showers, sunshine and smiles

The 2024 Pony Club Polocrosse Arena Challenge was held at Dallas Burston Polo Club on the 27th and 28th of April and saw over 60 Pony Club members from around the country compete for the different grades, in a fun and friendly atmosphere. There were Pony Club members as young as 6 years old, all the way up to the Pony Club's age limit of 25 years old!

There was ten hours of play on Saturday with the final match ending at 7pm and then play restarted at 8am on Sunday morning, to fit in all the games. Even the heavy rain on Saturday night and on Sunday morning did nothing to dampen their spirits and luckily the weather did brighten up as the day progressed.

The standard of play across the weekend was very high, as members and their horses showed how much they had improved during the winter months from their training. There were also new faces as some members took part in their first tournament and it was great to see them and also see them being supported and helped by more experienced players, including with the lending of ponies in the Minis grades. Two senior members took home the Bombers Trophies for overall Best Male and Best Female player, with Millie Dacosta Evans winning best female player and Jack Page of the Essex Farmers winning best male player for their brilliant performances over the weekend.

The Minis grade saw two mixed teams made up of members from different Branches compete in the Open Minis final after they came through the pool stages in the Minis competition. It was the Dragons team of Maggie Clark, Grace Hockly and Lottie Jones who eventually claimed the win against the Tigers team of Lola Flower, Kaitlyn Allen and Georgina Cheetham.

Maggie Clark's pony Galaxy won the Best Overall Minis Pony Prize, kindly donated by Anna Kimber Tarbuck. Galaxy not only played brilliantly in the Open Minis with Maggie but also played in a Novice Minis game when another pony couldn't play on the Sunday and was the perfect teacher to his less experienced jockey.

Grace Hockly's pony Snowy won Best Open Minis pony. Maggie Clark also won the best player award while Kaitlyn Allen and Rocky won Best Horse and Rider combination and Lottie Jones won Most Improved player.



*Action from the Minis grade*

In the Novice Minis it was the Walpole & District Branch team of Daisy King, Izzie Hardy and Mia Freegard who won the final against the North Warwickshire team of Edward Greatorex, Freddie Oliver-Byrne and Sophie King.

Lily Leeke and Whizz of the South Shropshire won Best Horse and Rider combination, while Ted, ridden by her brother Jim, won Best Novice Minis Pony. Mia Freegard won Best Player and Oscar Castaldini of the Warwickshire Hunt won Most Improved Player.

In the Novice Juniors the Warwickshire Hunt trio of Austin Hayes, Archie Wasdell and Millie Taylor who claimed the win in a round robin of matches, where teams were mixed around between games to help support players and give them all a chance to play in their preferred positions. This meant two teams finishing in equal second. They were the Area 6 section of Oliver Winter, Ava Lambert and Olivia Sharp and then Elli-May Baskerville of the Waveney Harrier, Summer Robertson of the Scunthorpe and District and Isla Oliver-Byrne of the North Warwickshire.

Austin Hayes won the Best Player award, while Pinot, which was ridden by Archie Wasdell won Best Horse. Millie Taylor won Most Improved Player and Ava Lambert and Rioja won Best Horse and Rider combination.



*Warwickshire Hunt and Area 6 battle it out in the Novice Juniors*

In Open Juniors it was a win for Essex and Suffolk, as their team of Olivia Kirkham, Ollie Rowbotham and Taryn Tinker beat the mixed Falcons team of Oliver Hayes, Charlotte Gee and Alfie Vollans in the final after both teams won their respective pools.

Olivia Kirkham also won the Best Player award, while Taryn Rinker took the Best Horse and Rider combination with Ziva. Oliver Hayes' horse Nobby won Best Horse and Tilly Threlfall of the North Northumberland won Most Improved Player award.

In the Novice Seniors competition it was the North Warwickshire who topped of the podium with their team of Keeley Rock, Katinka Frassoni and Jayda Willaims. Area 8's team of Stella Stearn, Toby Milner and Holly Theckston finished second after a hard fought final.



Stella Stearn and Tigger won the Best Horse and Rider combination, while Jayda Williams won Best Player. Fergus, ridden by Katinka Frassoni, won Best Horse and Holly Theckston won Most Improved Player.

The Open Seniors saw four experienced teams battle it out over the weekend but it was the mixed Hawks team of Millie Dacosta Evans, Philip Watney and Ama Mason who eventually came out of top with the Area 8 team of Jack Page, Kiki Flower and Hannah Davitt in second place.

Ama Mason won Most Improved Player, while Isabella Stone and Volt won Best Horse and Rider combination with Volt. The Best Player award went to Kiki Flower and Hannah Davitt's horse Molly won Best Horse.



*Hannah Davitt stretches out to grab the ball against Daisy Stone*

It was a fantastic weekend and a huge thank you must go to our hard working volunteers and umpires for all their work over the weekend. We were very lucky to have a number of members of the UK World Cup team there to help with umpiring over the weekend and it was great for members to have some experienced players to help them as they look to improve their own skills. We look forwards to seeing how the World Cup team gets on in South Africa in July and wish them the best of luck in their quest to bring the cup to the UK!

## **Full results:**

**Best Female Player:** Millie Dacosta Evans (South Northumberland)

**Best Male Player:** Jack Page (Essex Farmers)

## **Novice Minis:**

1st) Walpole and District – Izzie Hardy, Daisy King and Mia Freegard

2nd) North Warwickshire – Edward Greatorex, Freddie Oliver-Byrne and Sophie King

3rd) Area 7 – Lily Leeke (South Shropshire), Jim Leeke (South Shropshire) and Oscar Castaldini (Warwickshire Hunt)

4th) Area 8 – Katarina Westerling (Essex & Suffolk), Chloe Theckston (Essex Hunt North) and Alice Theckston (Essex Hunt North)

Best Player: Mia Freegard

Most Improved: Oscar Castaldini

Best Horse: Ted (Jim Leeke)

Best Horse & Rider: Lily Leeke and Whizz

## **Open Minis:**

1st) Dragons – Maggie Clark (South Shropshire), Grace Hockly (South Shropshire) and Lottie Jones (Tanatside)

2nd) Tigers – Lola Flower (Essex Hunt North), Kaitlyn Allen (Walpole & District) and Georgina Cheetham (Rufford Hunt)

Best Player: Maggie Clark

Most Improved: Lottie Jones

Best Horse: Snowy (Grace Hockly)

Best Horse & Rider: Kaitlyn Allen and Rocky

Best Overall Minis Pony Award (donated by Anna Kimber Tarbuck): Galaxy (Maggie Clark)

### **Novice Juniors:**

1st) Warwickshire Hunt – Austin Hayes, Archie Wasdell and Millie Taylor  
2nd equal) Olivia Sharp (Belvoir Hunt), Oliver Winter (Burton), Ava Lambert Burghley, Isla Oliver-Byrne (North Warwickshire), Summer Robertson (Scunthorpe & District) and Elli-May Baskerville (Waveney Harriers)

Best Player: Austin Hayes

Most Improved: Millie Taylor

Best Horse: Pinot (Archie Wasdell)

Best Horse & Rider: Ava Lambert and Rioja

### **Open Juniors:**

1st) Essex and Suffolk – Olivia Kirkham, Taryn Tinker and Ollie Rowbotham  
2nd) Falcons – Oliver Hayes (Warwickshire Hunt), Charlotte Gee (South Shropshire) and Alfie Anthony-Vollans (Llangeinor)  
3rd) Area 2 Pink – Ethan Campbell (Morpeth), Tegan Lorey (North Northumberland) and Tilly Threlfall (North Northumberland)  
4th) Area 2 Black – Anya Tate (Morpeth), Talula Mason (North Northumberland) and Nina Lowden-King (North Northumberland)  
5th) Area 6 – Perdy Gale (Burghley), Morvah Luke (Belvoir) and Zara Stafford (Burghley)  
6th) Area 8 – Sammy Westerling (Essex and Suffolk), Connie Fitton (Suffolk Hunt) and Maggie Flower (Essex Hunt North)

Best Player: Olivia Kirkham

Most Improved: Tilly Threlfall

Best Horse: Nobby (Oliver Hayes)

Best Horse & Rider: Taryn Tinker and Ziva

### **Novice Seniors:**

1st) North Warwickshire  
2nd) Area 8 – Stella Stearn (Suffolk Hunt), Toby Milner (Suffolk Hunt) and Holly Theckston (Essex Hunt North)

3rd) Young at Heart (Guest team) – Tim Bachelor, Matt Stearn and Damien Theckston

Best Player: Jayda Williams

Most Improved: Holly Theckston

Best Horse: Fergus (Katinka Frassoni)

Best Horse & Rider: Stella Stearn and Tigger

### **Open Seniors:**

1st) Hawks – Millie Dacosta Evans (South Northumberland), Ama Mason (North Northumberland) and Philip Watney (United Pack)

2nd) Area 8 – Jack Page (Essex Farmers), Kiki Flower (Essex Hunt North) and Hannah Davitt (Deanswood EC)

3rd) Flint and Denbigh – Daisy Stone, Katy Davies and Isabella Stone

4th) Area 7 – Jess Clark (South Shropshire), Alice Leeke (South Shropshire) and Georgie Wasdell (Warwickshire Hunt)

Best Player: Kiki Flower

Most Improved: Ama Mason

Best Horse: Molly (Hannah Davitt)

Best Horse & Rider: Isabella Stone and Volt