

HURSLEY HAMBLEDON HUNT

Milan's going places

A crunching fall for the favourite Lilbutso (Will Biddick) at the last fence in the men's open paved the way for Real Milan (Jack Jones) to cross the line first at Larkhill (11 December). These two horses battled for the lead from the penultimate, but the winning jockey felt he always had the upper hand, writes Lucy Pearson.

"I thought coming to the last that I had it," said Jack. "I've just beaten some of the best horses on the circuit; I feel like I'm dreaming."

Jack's father and Real Milan's owner and trainer Nick Jones was equally delighted.

"He is our only point-to-point horse and he lives with our two hunters and hacks through the village more boldly than them," he said. "It's a real family affair and days like today are what it's all about."

Will Biddick was stood down for the rest of the day.

"I'm sore," admitted Will.

"I thought my horse was going slightly better than Real Milan. They say that the best place for a spectator to stand here is at the last because it's renowned for catching people out."

The opening hunt members' race was more straight forward for the favourite, Shantou Breeze (Lance Madgwick). Tommo (Oz Wedmore) took an early lead but tired dramatically seven from home.

"We knew that Tommo would run keenly, so I took the chance not to go after him too soon,"



Shantou Breeze (Lance Madgwick) justifies favouritism in the hunt members'



Men's open winner Real Milan (Jack Jones) disputes the lead with Lilbutso

said Lance. "Coming down the hill [towards the start of the second circuit] I was beginning to think that we wouldn't catch him, but Shantou Breeze is a fit mare and I was quietly confident."

A hot ladies' open included the 2011 Hennessy Gold Cup winner Carruthers (Lily Bradstock) and Olympic cycling gold medalist Victoria Pendleton on Vesperal Dream. After a false start and a fall for Victoria, the race was won by the favourite Aikideau (Bryony Frost).

"He did a leg two years ago," said the nine-year-old's co-owner Pippa James. "Jack

Barber picked it up straightway and he had two years off.

"We had no expectations when he came back but he won four races last season and now again today."

After going a strong gallop on good ground in the restricted, Coolharbour Joe (Martin McIntyre) was first over the line for the Mash Club syndicate (see box, p91).

Sam Waley-Cohen took the conditions race aboard Anquetta. It was an exciting finish with the Luke Harvey-owned Porlock Bay (Gina Andrews) finishing strongly and nearly taking the win from Anquetta on the line.

"He's a wily old fox," said Sam. "He was idling a bit but the race went as planned."

With Keltic Laision depositing jockey George Hiscock at the first and Sam Waley-Cohen unseated by Facile Bien at the third, the rest of the field had two loose horses to contend with for most of the concluding open maiden. After warring around the home turn, Titans Approach triumphed over Orchardstown Cross (Lara Mahon) giving jockey Martin McIntyre his second win of the day. **H&H**

'I've just beaten some of the best horses on the circuit; I feel like I'm dreaming'

Jack Jones
on Real Milan

COMMENT

David
Simpson



'Hard graft and dirty hands'

TWELVE months ago I was capering around the paddock at Chaddesley Corbett celebrating my second win as an owner. This time around, I'll be leading up one of the horses in Gina and Tom Ellis Racing's Ice And A Slice Racing Club.

That's because trainer Tom and jockey Gina have employed me as a member of their yard staff, so I've swapped the corporate world, as business development manager at AGA, for a barn full of point-to-point horses.

Early starts, hard graft and dirty hands are par for the course, and I now understand just how much effort goes into getting a horse to the racecourse.

There's also another important element to my role, something that I'm equally passionate about: social media. It's a fantastic tool for a business of any size, and something that every point-to-point yard could use to engage with their owners and with followers of the sport. It's also a great way to attract new owners — and everybody would like more of those.

A few simple rules I follow are to make the content valuable to the audience, ensure it is relevant with daily updates, and to go for quality over quantity. I use lots of photos and video clips (and a bit of humour) to give followers a flavour of life on a point-to-point yard, and hopefully encourage them to get involved. **H&H**