

Essex and Suffolk Team Chase

The Essex and Suffolk team chase, currently East Anglia's only affiliated team chase event, brought thrills and spills to Semer, near Hadleigh on 6th November.

Some welcome rain had finally fallen in the week leading up to the event, boosting entries at this tremendously welcoming and fun event, which is run over hilly and challenging terrain with plenty of substantial hedges.

Highlight of the day was the Goring Hotel and Material Change open team chase qualifier, a tussle for victory between Relentless, who have dominated the autumn season, and reigning national champions Art Hotel Chasers.

Relentless ran as a three man squad of Pytchley hunt field master Rowan Cope (Smirnoff), point to point jockey Dickie Barrett (Mani) and Will Grant (Fox Grant Ferrari), who made a five hour journey from Marlborough, Wilts to take part.

Rowan gave a confident lead on the former racehorse Smirnoff, with Will Grant's Ferrari making up ground over the fences with his bold jumping. Dickie Barrett had to sit tight on the enthusiastic Mani.

Art Hotel Chasers ran them incredibly close, getting the tightest of turns over the switchbacks between the early fences. Sarah Myhill's Dingbat gave a fantastic lead, with Yvonne Goss and an increasingly confident Haxton almost upsides.

Chris Davey gave the relatively inexperienced Larry a great ride at the back, and Lissie Siedel kicked on from third slot to catch Sarah and Yvonne at the finish.

A strong round from the Cunning Stunts took them to third place, and their 'all welcome' approach has introduced a new convert to the sport.

Phoebe Buckley from Cambridgeshire joined the line up for the first time with her international event horse Little Tiger, and put in a great debut performance.

"Little Tiger needed to step back from top level eventing, but she is not ready to retire altogether so I'm delighted that she has taken to this," said Phoebe. "It's great to find that team chasing can give competition horses another job after a busy career."

The intermediate was won by Team Ride Away, who came all the way from Yorkshire for the second year running. With Stephen Clark, Rachel Andrews and Bryan Allen on the Clark family's ex-racehorses, joined by hunt race specialist William Bissell, their slick round gave them a margin of 2sec over the Art Hotel Racers.

"This is a fantastic sport for us to enjoy as a family, and the Essex and Suffolk is one of the best events for its course and its atmosphere," said Stephen.

The novice class gave mainly local teams a flavour of the sport, being run against a bogey time, but still requiring plenty of skill with hedges, timber and drops to negotiate, while a hunter trial kicked off the day in style.

