

Contendro is a contender

A horse bought for £1 proves more than his worth at Bury Farm, high hopes for a 'pocket rocket' after a Scope Festival qualifier win, and a one-two-three at Crofton Manor. Stephanie Bateman reports

JUGGLING two young children with a livery business is a feat in itself, but to compete two horses successfully as well takes some doing, as Nicki Bates knows all too well.

"Some days it's like The Krypton Factor trying to organise everything," says Nicki. "My husband Michael is a dressage rider and we have a 12-box yard with liveries and our own horses at home.

"Michael and I take it in turns to look after the kids while one of us rides or teaches, and both sets of grandparents are extremely supportive and help a lot with the children, which enables us to carry on doing it. It's full-on and takes a lot of organising — but we love being busy."

It's obviously working as Nicki won the 1.25m Blue Chip qualifier at Crofton Manor, Hants (5 December) on her nine-year-old mare Warren Miss Contendro, followed by the 1m Scope Festival qualifier at Quob Stables EC, Hants (3 February) riding five-year-old Billy Prompt.

Nicki bought both horses last September — Billy Prompt by Cevin Z from William Funnell and Warren Miss Contendro from Tim Stockdale.

"I used to showjump but sold my horses to have children, and started looking again last year once the kids were that bit older," explained Nicki.

"We're local to the Billy Stud [in Surrey] so I popped down and bought Billy Prompt," she continued.

"Then Tim, with whom I used to train as a young rider, introduced me to Warren Miss Contendro. I wanted a more advanced horse that I could jump the bigger tracks with and Tim had jumped Warren Miss Contendro internationally, so she fitted the bill perfectly."

Nicki describes the mare as "big, scopey and powerful but super-sensitive" and hopes to



Juggling act: Nicky Bates and Warren Miss Contendro win the 1.25m Blue Chip qualifier at Crofton Manor

apply for bigger shows this year.

"She's qualified for the Scope Festival and we'll do some county shows with her," added Nicki.

Billy Prompt is also showing promise and has qualified for the Blue Chip discovery final.

"He hasn't touched a pole or stopped winning since I bought him," Nicki said.

"He's only 15.2hh so he's a little pocket rocket," she continued. "He won't be jumping grands prix, but at the lower levels, he's an out-and-out winner. He's cheeky and almost too confident, but once he gets in the ring he switches to work mode. He knows his job."

During their "three quiet years having children", Nicki and Michael invested time and money into their yard.

"We put more stables in and a walker to improve the yard," Nicki said. "Now we both have some lovely horses, we're ready to get going again."

'Tank' takes command
WARMBLOOD gelding Newmiln Jamestown is paying his owners back for putting their faith in him, and spending all of £1 buying him, by winning at shows.

The 12-year-old, 16.3hh "tank" won the 90cm open at Bury Farm, Bucks (21 January) under Roxanne Britnell.

It was Roxanne's mother Dawn and her brother David who saved "James" from the knacker's yard four years ago.

"Mum saw a post on a forum from a lady who was having trouble with her horse and had

organised the knacker man to come and take him if no one wanted him," said Roxanne, 18, who is in her second year studying Animal Management at Berkshire College of Agriculture.

"Mum got in contact with her and arranged to go and see him the next day. She ended up buying him for £1 for my brother.

"He'd been kept on a big livery yard and the routine had really stressed him out, making him very difficult to handle."

Although a bit tricky to start with, James soon settled down at his new home.

"Now that we've had him for four years he is lovely and wouldn't hurt a fly," said Roxanne.

"We still have to be careful



Roxanne Britnell pilots Barretstown Derby to British novice victory

about what we do with the other horses around him and he's on special feed to prevent ulcers, but he is much happier."

Roxanne also competed her nine-year-old part-thoroughbred Barretstown Derby, who won the British novice and was second in the discovery.

"I had a lesson with John Whinnett, who had me collect the horses and wait for a fence so that they got in deeper and jumped higher rather than flatter. I used my new technique at Bury Farm, and both horses jumped so much better and each won a class."

One, two, three for Kullich ST JAMES school pupil Serena Kullich enjoyed a successful outing to Crofton Manor, Hants (30 January) where she claimed a first, second and third with two ponies.

She won the 1.10m open and was second in the 1m open riding nine-year-old Buddy Love and was third

in the 1m open with seven-year-old Connemara Ardwholihane Bouncer.

"We got Bouncer from Ireland last year and he came fifth in the Introductory Classic at Horse of the Year Show and was fifth in the discovery championships," said Serena.

"He is very willing and quite forward going, which I like because he takes me to the fences," she added.

Her other ride Buddy is by 128cm jumping stallion Tiny Tim and was sourced by her trainer Neil Fiddes.

"We got him only a couple of months ago so he's still quite new to me," Serena said. "He needs a lot of confidence from me when he's jumping but he felt really good at Crofton."

Serena also owns an eight-year-old jumping stallion by Westside Mirah, Kilcurry Dawn. She said: "My aim with them is to do newcomers and Foxhunter second rounds and jump the JC tracks with Buddy." **H&H**

ONE TO WATCH

Naomi Howard-Batts

AT just nine years old, Naomi Howard-Batts is already making an impression on the showjumping circuit.

She has won the past four 90cm classes riding her 10-year-old, 135cm part-bred Connemara gelding Quarry (pictured, below), whom she recently bought from Oli Fletcher. The pair's most recent win was at Crofton Manor, Hants (30 January), where they won the 90cm open.

"We bought the pony only in October but they've clicked straight away," said Naomi's mother Melanie. "She hadn't done a 90cm until she got Quarry, but already she's keen to move onto the bigger 1m and 1.10m tracks."

Despite his obvious penchant for showjumping, Quarry hasn't always been a jumping pony.

"He started life as a riding school pony for the Riding for the Disabled Association [RDA] but was quickly spotted as a talented jumping pony," said Melanie. "The Fletchers bought him and had great success with him — he won the silver league last year, but Oli was getting big for him and moved onto horses, so we bought him.

"I can understand why he was so good as an RDA pony as he's super-quiet until he sees a jump — then his scope and power shines through"

Naomi, a keen member of the Cowdray Hunt branch of the Pony Club, trains with Jo Jackson and is described as being "very gutsy, totally fearless and completely obsessed with showjumping".

"She's always down at the yard and if she's not on the ponies, she's grooming them and plaiting them up," said Melanie. "She's qualified for the Pony Club Dengie Winter League championships, and will start aiming at the bigger tracks now."



BACK FROM THE BRINK

'A horse landed on me and snapped my leg in half'

NIKKI LLOYD ended her run of seconditis when winning the 85cm class at Petley Wood EC, East Sussex (31 January) riding her 12-year-old gelding Zaragoza.

She had been placed second nine times, so a win was seriously overdue.

"I've now done my four double clears for the second round later in the year," said a relieved Nikki.

"I bought him only at the end of the summer so we're still a relatively new partnership, but he's already doing really well."

Nikki showjumped as a youngster but gave up when she was 15 and

returned to riding only three years ago.

"I broke my leg in April 2013 and had to have a year off," said Nikki, who is a confectionery sales rep. "A horse landed on top of me and snapped my leg in half. I had to learn to walk again and the doctors said I would never ride again."

Nikki kept herself busy getting her eight-year-old daughter up and running on the showjumping circuit and soon found herself back in the saddle.

"I got back on at Christmas in 2013 and part-exchanged the horse that broke my leg for Zaragoza," explained Nikki, who owns five horses in total.

"I like doing the amateur classes and would love to get Zaragoza to the Liverpool amateur finals this year."