

When will 'Queenie' make Esquire a grand prix knight?

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An international horse changes rider, a List 1 judge's 'final fling' gains outdoor confidence and low maintenance cobs make their riders happy

VICKI THOMPSON-WINFIELD's 67.11% PSG win and 68.82% Inter I third place this show are just the start of her competition partnership with David and Angela Jones' 10-year-old Valeron x Krack C stallion Esquire III.

The change in rider from Kerry Mackin to Vicki occurred a mere two and a half weeks before, following Esquire and Kerry's disappointing scores and placings in the CDI at Joosland, The Netherlands, last month. Commenting, Kerry said: "Esquire's mega talented but not an easy horse at competitions. At the Dutch show he gave me nothing although I rode every inch of him. I had no more tools left in the box. I'm devastated but you have to be realistic — I'm probably not the one to get the best out of him. Vicki's experience is priceless and she will be able to take him up the levels."

Vicki, who is affectionately called 'Queenie' by Carl Hester, said: "By the second test I had learned more what I needed to do in the ring. Esquire has a real talent for canter pirouettes but the timing with changes is always something you have to work out in a new partnership. He looks as if he's bold, but actually he holds back and he hasn't enough balance yet to keep his own rhythm and is too reliant on the rider. He's got to have the chance to do it more for himself and work more through his body and out to the bridle."

"I will take Esquire to local shows and possibly to Addington to find out how his brain works and how I need to set him up and hopefully later in the summer and through the winter I can actually change a few things. I have to redo some basic stuff and he will have to learn to go for a lighter lady rider so it will take a little time for us to agree on things. I can arrange the tricks, no problem, but the basic gaits have to be steadied and the horse has to become loose and supple and move for himself."

Vicki, who has also taken over the ride on the Jones' seven-year-old Spielberg stallion Hurricane, added: "It's always lovely to have new projects and they're fun horses. They're powerful but they're quite attentive and they're not naughty. I drive passed the gate on my way to work at Oldenraig so it's very easy. I'm there to ride at 7am out by 8.45."

Jersey-raised Lucy Amy won all three of her classes as a Young Rider with Extra Time at the Hickstead CDI last year. At this show they scored 71.05% to head the inter I. Commenting on her test, Lucy said: "He felt really good in his test but as we've been practising grand prix work he decided he wanted to do some ones in the twos. I told him 'thank you': but not really what I wanted! The 21-year-old rider added, "Due to my August birthday I'm out of Young Riders so I want to start U25s this year. Hopefully Extra Time will be doing his first Inter II next month."



Vicki Thompson Winfield took over the ride this show on Esquire III from Kerry Mackin who made her Continental debut on him in Le Mans last October.

Kerry followed Andrew Gould into the big Valeron x Krack C stallion's stable at the beginning of 2016.

The highlight of Andrew's partnership with Esquire was undoubtedly their Inter I freestyle at the Hickstead Invitational — the show run in lieu of the Hickstead CDI in 2016 when the horse was only seven.

Andrew was placed second with Esquire in only the horse's fifth PSG test awarded 70.53% by the international panel of judges. Then, on the urging of owner David Jones, Andrew rode the Inter I freestyle, without preparation to a floorplan and music designed for another horse, to be rewarded with 74.63%