



Tenbury Wells' Kate Atlee and her horse Lochness enjoyed plenty of success together in Lancashire.

County duo in national finals

EQUESTRIAN

DRESSAGE duo Kate Atlee and Leonie Smith were in great form at the North West Regional Dressage Championships staged at Myerscough College in Lancashire.

The competition offered both regional titles and entry to the National Winter Dressage Championships, due to be staged in Solihull in April, which will be contested by many of the best up-and-coming horses in the country.

Atlee, based in Tenbury Wells, claimed the Speedi-Beet Advanced Medium title on the 16.3hh chestnut Lochness, who she was riding for Great Witley owner Sarah Outwin. This was one of the most prestigious titles on offer at Myerscough and Atlee shared top spot with Hampshire rider Jacky Stolper in a closely-fought competition.

"I've had the ride on Lochness for a year now and we also qualified for last year's Summer National Championships," said Atlee. "He is improving all the time and I'm aiming to take him up a level to Prix St Georges."

The pair also finished second in the Supafeed Advanced Medium Freestyle regional final where they scored an excellent 71.22 per cent to make sure of their second ticket to the nationals.

The freestyle competitions are always a favourite with riders who can devise their own test, within certain pre-set criteria, and perform to a selection of music.

"I used music by Jools Holland and Robbie Williams — the judges said this suited my horse's character and he enjoyed the music and really rose to the occasion," Atlee added. "I was also fourth in the Medium Open regional final on my own horse Stein, a Dutch-bred rising eight-year-old who did a super test.

"He made a couple of mistakes but finished on 68.56 per cent, only a few marks behind the winner, and I was really pleased with him."

Leonie Smith, who is based at Daneswood Equestrian in Ombersley, was third in the Elementary Open regional final and also goes on to the nationals.

She was riding a 16.3hh flea-bitten grey horse Absolut, a ride she gained at the end of 2006 from Brömsgrove owner Philippa Bishop — a successful disabled para dressage rider.

"Philippa took Absolut to the National Summer Championships last year where she was well-placed in the Grade IV Para Championships," said Smith. "We share the ride and Philippa has been selected for an international para competition in Belgium with him."

At the regional finals, the horse scored particularly well for his extended trot and natural paces.