

A little dressage glitter

Gabrielle Bonham partners the six-year-old Sheepcote Dancer to supreme honours at the Ponies (UK) Winter Championships



PONIES (UK) WINTER CHAMPIONSHIPS ADDINGTON EC, BUCKS 31 March-1 April

By Tricia Johnson

AN elegant performance from one of the least experienced combinations captivated

supreme judge Jayne Webber to take the overall winter champion's title ahead of an 18-strong field.

The locally based Bonham family's Sheepcote Dancer, produced by Emma-Jayne Dujardin, floated her way to the top spot with a light, expressive show in the hands of 14-year-old Gabrielle Bonham. En route, the

pair had captured an intermediate and open part-bred ridden title.

British Olympic dressage hope Charlotte Dujardin, Emma-Jayne's sister, is credited as the catalyst for the pair's success.

"She's started helping us with the horse and we finally made the crucial breakthrough in her way of going only recently," said Emma-Jayne. "And although

Charlotte doesn't normally teach children, she agreed to take Gabrielle on and has worked wonders with her, too."

Supreme judge Jayne Webber said: "The champion looked the complete package from the moment she walked into the ring. She was beautifully produced, went very well, was very well ridden and gave a polished

performance — a very nice young horse indeed."

The six-year-old Dancer, bred by dressage specialists David and Serena Pincus, is by the Donnerhall son Doctor Doolittle out of a Welsh part-bred, who also competed in dressage. She came to the Bonhams six months ago from Adam Winbourne and this was considered easily her best result to date.

"No way were we expecting it," said Emma-Jayne. "We hoped Jayne [Webber] might like her as she's a real hack type, but we were up against so many more experienced partnerships that it was a total surprise."

The previous Ponies (UK) best for Gabrielle — who is beginning her GCSE exams — was reserve in the Timberwolf supreme at the

summer championships two years ago with her show hunter pony, Deanhills Golden Heights.

"She is just the most lovely mare to ride and is a genuinely nice person, too," she said of Dancer.

The following day, Jayne Turney took over the ride for the mare's first ever open hack class, where she stood a creditable third in a good line of eight.