

Tapner beats the weather

SOMERLEY PARK, HANTS

30-31 March

By Jane Perry

PAUL TAPNER, riding Kilronan, continued his good start to the season with an emphatic win in the CIC** at a weather-battered Somerley Park, sponsored by Savills.

Paul was the only rider to score a sub-40 dressage mark, 37.8, giving him a strong advantage going into the jumping phases. With a clear in the showjumping and a fast cross-country round, adding just 4.8 time-penalties, he posted an unassailable lead early on in the class.

"Kilronan came to my yard last year to sell on for the previous owners, but the longer he was there, the more I liked him and fortunately Fred and Penny Barker bought him for me to keep on the team," said Paul.

"He's an Irish horse, produced in Scotland by Frances Mullen, who also started my advanced horse Kilfinnie, so the conditions here didn't bother him at all. He kept up a beautiful rhythm in the dressage and, being a grey, looks really smart."

Paul admitted he had been quietly planning to win at Somerley in order to persuade the Barkers that Kilronan is ready for the CCI** at Houghton, rather than the CCI*.

French rider Arthur Duffort, with Julia Hardy's Roxanna VI, posted the second fastest cross-country round of the class to secure the runner-up spot, demoting his mentor Andrew



Kilronan proves he's ready for the CCI** at Houghton by winning the CIC** here with Paul Tapner



Andrew Nicholson claims third place in the CIC** on seven-year-old Quimbo

Nicholson, riding Quimbo, into third. Arthur has been with Andrew for four years and the "Nicholson touch" really seems to be rubbing off on him this season.

"Roxanna has taken quite a time to come to her best, but she improved a lot over the winter," said Arthur. "She's not the most talented horse, but makes up for that by trying hard."

Arthur also finished in sixth on Texas.

When asked how he felt about

being beaten by his pupil, Andrew joked: "I'm thinking of retiring and becoming his manager!"

For this year's event, course-designers Eric Winter and Adele Schardt had revamped the cross-country by enlarging the water complex so it can be jumped from different directions, adding several combination fences and making a new loop for the two-star class. Feedback from the riders was very favourable and it was felt the new additions on the two-star course made it much