



Partnerships

Olympic hopeful Harry Meade is preparing for the most important season of his equestrian career – and perhaps too for a particularly special wedding



Starting at Badminton this April, Harry Meade, the 27-year-old event rider with his horse Wild Lone, will be focused on securing a place in the 2012 Olympic team. Harry is one of Britain's leading event riders. Despite having a relatively small yard, he has become one of the most successful and consistent competitors at top level. His yard is in the quiet village of West Littleton on the southern edge of the Cotswolds, and he lives in Luckington with his wife, Rosie.

They are enjoying a rare and precious weekend together at The Lakes by Yoo, a luxury second-home development near Fairford. Harry still returns home to ride but then back to Fairford for a lazy afternoon and evening. "Once the season starts we have very few free weekends so we're making the most of this fantastic opportunity."

Their wedding in Northleach, near Rosie's family home, was one of the events of 2010, partly due to their royal guests, Prince William and Kate Middleton. Harry smiles politely when asked about the upcoming royal wedding, and whether he will be attending. He declines to comment, but smiles as he says: "It is unlikely that I will be competing that day."

Harry has grown up with eventing and horses. His father, Richard Meade, was one of Britain's most successful event riders from the 60s to the 80s. He won Badminton, Burghley and three Olympic gold medals.

"My father put me on a horse when I was six months old. He retired from top-level competition when I was very young, but we always had other riders based at home and training with Dad, some of whom went on to win Olympic medals. They were a great inspiration to me."

Below
William and Kate were guests at Harry and Rosie's wedding last year, and this year the roles will be reversed!



PHOTO: ADAM FANTHORPE

Harry physically bristles with excitement as he talks about the thrill of spotting a horse with potential

Harry trained with his father before becoming apprentice rider to William Fox-Pitt for several seasons, after which he set up on his own. While intensely proud of his father, Harry has his own ideas of how the yard and his career should progress. This is not a young man living in his father's shadow. He has spent a great deal of time considering the challenge of all successful yards – the importance of horse power. Rather than having just one or two good horses, Harry wants to create a yard full of great potential. So, instead of leaving the owners to find the horses, Harry is proactive. He travels around the country scouting for horses which have that spark. At the same time he looks for new owners and then pairs them with the horses.

"We now have our first crop of young horses which we have trained from the start and paired them up with owners. They are now at the beginning of their competitive career, and it is such an exciting time."

At the age of 18, Harry competed in the Junior European Championships. By the time he was 25 he had completed the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials and the Land Rover Burghley House trials

a total of 10 times, winning the best under-25 award at Burghley three years running and setting a new record.

His proudest moment so far was receiving the Armada Dish – the award given to riders for five Badminton completions. "I was told that I was the youngest person ever to have won the Armada Dish, in the 60 year history of the event. That was incredibly humbling and satisfying."

Harry says Rosie has made a huge difference to his life. She has become his office support, back-up staff, personal assistant and host. "I ride seven or eight hours a day, but while I am out training the calls and the e-mails never stop. Most importantly she is a huge support at home. It is great to have someone to enjoy the highs with and to help shoulder the lows. There are a lot of commitments besides the straightforward training – running the business, looking after the owners, the sponsors, the horses themselves and our employees. Rosie has made such a difference."

From March to October, Harry competes almost every weekend, which explains why the weekend at The Lakes is so special. "Between my training and competing, and Rosie's teaching, we don't get much time together relaxing," says Harry. Sharing the lakefront house is Snip, Harry's beloved lurcher.

All conversations return to horses. Harry physically bristles with excitement as he talks about the thrill of spotting a horse with potential and then making someone's dream come true of owning a horse.

"Finding a good horse is difficult. Finding one on your own with no experience is even more so. What I am doing is a bit like scouting for football talent. Every two or three weeks I travel the country looking for the best young stock. Many people want to get involved with horses but don't know where to start. We hope that we can make their dream come true." □

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