

An interview with...

Harry Meade

Over our last four issues we have teamed up with Dodson & Horrell and their new ambassador, Harry Meade to bring to you four masterclasses from the international event rider. Having represented Great Britain on numerous occasions, Harry was part of the silver medal winning team at the

2014 world championships in Normandy. He has been placed at Badminton nine times and is the youngest rider to have ever received a much sought after Armada dish, which is awarded for five Badminton completions. This year, Harry has been selected for the lottery funded World Class Squad for

the seventh consecutive year, whilst also being a member of the GB Nations Cup squad. He also commented for the BBC at the Longines FEI European Eventing Championships held at Blair Castle last month. Here we get an insight into the life of the eventing star.



How do you tend to celebrate a win or a successful event?

We are very lucky to be supported by Pol Roger so we normally crack open a bottle with our owners, grooms and support team. It is important to stand back and enjoy the good times, particularly with those who put in so much to make it happen.

What do you enjoy doing on the odd day you get off?

Days off during the season are few and far between but on the rare days we have off, I try to get away from the yard and spend time with my family and friends.

What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?

Always give your horses time. My father always talked about 'leaving no stone unturned' and my aim with each horse is to feel that, at the end of their career, you have no regrets, and there is no need for a second chance.

How do your horses get rewarded for their hard work?

We have lovely turnout with really good quality grass. Our horses enjoy

plenty of time in the field followed by a good massage with the Equissage. They do work hard but they have a pretty good life too.

What are your top three feeding tips?

1. Feeding is such an important part of the horses' wellbeing and performance so give your horses the best quality feed available to you. If you are going to economise, do not do so on their feed.
2. Feed little and often. We are fortunate to have the manpower and time to feed our horses four small feeds a day and we also divide their hay into four portions too. Combined with plenty of turnout this routine mimics the horses' natural feeding patterns with constant grazing. This means they get the most out of the food, reduces the risk of stomach ulcers, and keeps them mentally relaxed. Having something to chew on goes a long way to having a happy horse.
3. We weigh our horses on a weekly basis to monitor weight loss or gain. It takes out the guess work and reduces fluctuations in condition. It also enables me to compare a horse's condition to previous seasons.

If you could have any other career, what would you do?

I would have loved to have been an architect which I know I would have really enjoyed, but I am lucky to do something I love every day.

Harry is always looking for new rides at all levels. If you think you have a potential superstar that you would like to put with a top rider, then feel free to contact Harry via his website to find out more. harrymeade.com

The three horses we used in our training series were:

Mister Optimistic (Mo) - six year old gelding.

I started riding Mo as a four year old. He started competing at BE100 at five years old and finished that season at novice level. This year he continued at novice and finished with a one star.

Catherstone Definitive (Fin) - six year old gelding.

We found Fin as an unbacked three year old and I was attracted to him as his breeding is very similar to that of my old 4* horse Midnight Dazzler. He can be quite a handful but has lots of potential. At five he competed BE100, and this season (as a six year old) he ran at novice and finished up with an intermediate.

Tenareze (Taz) - six year old gelding.

Taz came over from France at the end of last season. He had been very successful in the young horse classes over there and is a lovely compact model of a horse. I dropped him down to novice to consolidate his education at the foundation levels, and he then moved up to intermediate level for the second half of the season.



If you have missed any of the Harry Meade master classes then you can watch the videos on our YouTube channel: Redpin Publishing

Setting your horse up for success with

Harry Meade



We have teamed up with Dodson & Horrell and their new ambassador, Harry Meade, to share with you his top training exercises that he uses regularly with his horses. Known for his quiet and sympathetic style of riding, Harry gives us an insight into setting your horse up for success, from the arena to the cross country field.



Exercise focus: Instilling supreme confidence in your horse.

Horses: Tenareze (Taz) and Catherstone Definitive (Fin)

The exercise: Walking into cross country hazards on a loose rein including water, ditches, steps, banks and eventually actual cross country fences. This enables the horse to have a good look, accept what is there and feel confident about jumping it. This also helps the horse develop a more powerful jumping technique and become more nimble on his feet.

Harry explains how to ride it: "The exercise of walking into fences with a loose contact encourages horses to jump because they are genuinely comfortable and content with what is in front of them, they are not just jumping because they are travelling with so much momentum

and adrenaline that they are content to jump blindly. This gives horses a real base of confidence whereby they are able to jump quite difficult fences, including into water, in total cold blood (without the adrenaline pumping). Through this they form an acceptance of what is in front of them, so when you are out competing they are deeply familiar with and accepting of whatever they might be faced with."

Harry begins by walking in and out of the water on a long rein, allowing the horse to 'play' in the water so he is not scared to be in there. He then moves on to jumping down a step into the water on a long rein, starting with a small step and gradually building up so the horse is happy to walk off a much bigger step into the water. He then does the same jumping up a step out of the water, all the time from a walk on a totally loose rein.

Harry is very quiet with his body. His reins are long so the horse does not reach the end of the slack of the rein when he jumps. Harry explains: "To do this successfully, riders must understand that unless the rein is excessively loose, the horse will make contact with the bit in the air, and even the most insignificant contact is like catching the horse in the mouth."

He goes on to explain how to achieve this: "Make sure the horse is in front of the leg, even though you are still walking, and in the last stride hold the buckle of the reins in one hand and the neck strap with the other. The horse can use all the rein he wants without meeting any contact in mid-air."

Having enough power to jump up a step from a walk requires the rider to use the back of the heel, where the spur is, and also carry a dressage stick, so that on take off you can lightly touch the quarters. "This is not an aid to reprimand, and it does not make the horse go faster, but it does help him jump cleanly up a step from the walk without leaving a hind leg on the edge."

Harry links several fences together, re-establishing walk between each one. At ditches, Harry approaches in exactly the same way; with the horse in front of the leg at a walk, on a loose

rein, with his heels on the horse and in the last stride he holds the neck strap with one hand and rocks back with his upper body to look at the sky.

We asked Harry how he would deal with a horse that refuses or is difficult to get to focus. Harry explained:

"If the horse starts refusing, it's about being strong in the right way and very soft at the same time. With your heel you want to really encourage the horse to jump the fence from a walk or a standstill but with your hands you must remain soft. The lightest of touches with a dressage stick can really help a horse who wants to jump - when he looks into the bottom of a ditch or into the water, he wants to jump but his hind quarters are frozen. The slightest touch with a dressage stick is like a small static electric shock (the sort you get from touching a car door), it is not painful but it is enough to trigger the quarters into the thrusting action which enables them to jump.

Asking a more experienced horse and rider for a lead is one way of encouraging the horse to understand what is being asked, but then do the same course again without a lead.

For your position when going over the jump, it is important not to get in front of the movement; this is the biggest mistake you can make as a rider. If you get in front of the movement then the horse is entitled to stop. It is much



Harry allows the horse to stretch and play in the water whilst walking

A common misconception is that a buzzy or sharp type of horse is by default in front of the leg or brave, and therefore does not need extra energy on take off - he does!

better that you are slightly behind the movement and have the horse in front of you, without it going faster.

"When the horse jumps from a walk, you are likely to get left behind. Therefore you should prepare by making sure that you have long reins in one hand and one finger of the other hand on the neck strap. You



Now the horse is more confident about jumping into the water

Photos by Nick Perry

Watch Harry demonstrate this exercise by watching the video on our YouTube channel: Redpin Publishing



When Harry slips the reins, he slips one hand back to the buckle as the other hand prepares to re-take the reins on landing



On drop fences, be forgiving with your hands

Harry's training tips:

What are your three top tips for walking the course?

1. At technical combinations ask yourself what question is the course designer asking here?

For example if you have a table then three long strides on a straight line to a corner, the course designer is asking whether riders can approach a fence at a gallop and maintain accuracy without putting the handbrake on.

2. Ride the shortest line between fences.

I often walk the open spaces where there are no jumps several times in order to find the fastest route. Think about where to cut corners and where to hang out around a bend to a fence; keeping up the speed can be preferable to coming on a tighter line that might make you hook at the fence.

3. When walking the course, know what you are aiming for.

Pick a precise point on the fence, the size of a postage stamp, where you intend to jump. Standing square onto the fence, look onto the horizon and pick a point that you are aiming for as this gives you your line.

Before you get on, talk through the course with someone and describe from memory the type of fence, the point on the fence you are going to jump, and the corresponding point on the horizon.

This means that when you are galloping towards the fence, you do not have to be constantly trying to analyse whether you are straight. For example, you know that jumping over the middle post, aiming for the third tree on the right in the field beyond will give you the optimum line.

Over coming these by developing a complete acceptance means your horse will never have anything to worry about again.

have to have forgiving hands and good balance, be slightly behind the movement and use plenty of leg. Do not confuse being in front of the leg with increased speed though, they are two separate things. Likewise, a common misconception is that a buzzy or sharp type of horse is by default in front of the leg or brave, and therefore does not need extra energy on take off - he does!

"A good tip on slipping the reins, is to have the buckle in one hand and grab half way down the reins with the other hand on landing. This saves having to fumble to regain control after a fence." By nature horses are most wairy of jumping natural hazards that they have evolved to avoid in the wild - ditches, steps and water.

Over coming these by developing a complete acceptance means your horse will never have anything to worry about again.

Harry is one of Britain's leading event riders. He finished third at Badminton last year and was a member of the silver medal winning team at the World Championships. He was also voted the 2014 Rider of the Year.

Harry is always looking for new rides at all levels. For more information visit harrymeade.com



Now putting it all together, Harry approaches fences at canter on a relaxed, loose-ish rein and the horse is confident and all the time maintains a steady rhythm



Get the horse used to jumping in and out of water from walk



When the horse jumps from a walk the movement is exaggerated



Watch Harry demonstrate this exercise by watching the video on our YouTube channel: Redpin Publishing

