

Your Horse & Country Magazine

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**WE'RE
JUST
WILD
ABOUT
HARRY!**

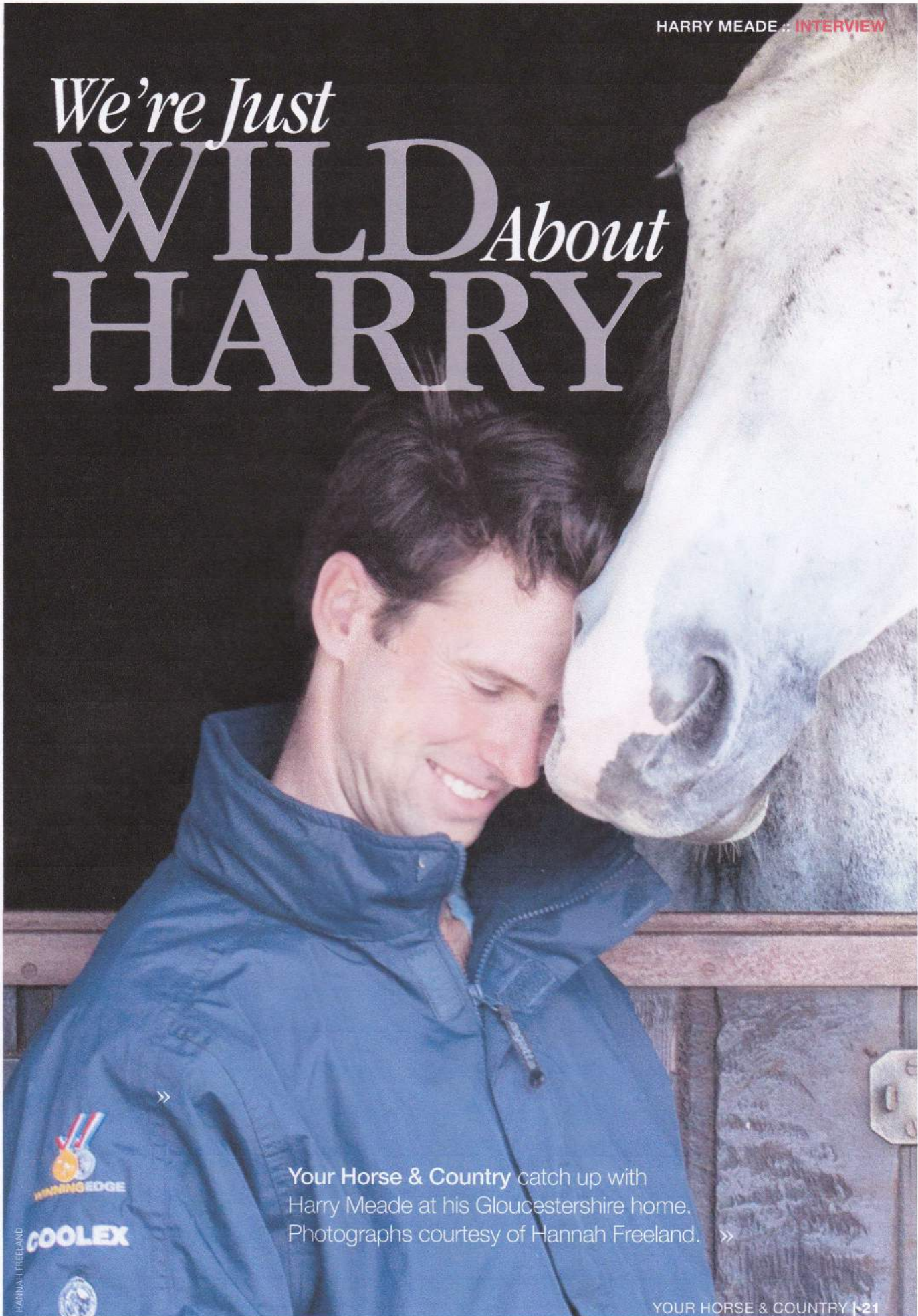
*Exclusive interview with World-Class
International Event Rider Harry Meade*


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EQUIFEAST


**HANNAH
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PHOTOGRAPHY

We're Just
WILD *About*
HARRY



WINNING EDGE
COOLEX
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Your Horse & Country catch up with Harry Meade at his Gloucestershire home. Photographs courtesy of Hannah Freeland. >>



Harry Meade is one of Britain's leading event riders. He represented Great Britain as part of the silver medal winning team at the 2014 World Championships in Normandy. Although only 31 years of age he has completed Badminton nine times, last year finishing in 3rd place. Harry is the youngest rider to have ever received a much sought after Armada Dish, which are awarded for five Badminton completions.

Your Horse & Country are welcomed into the home of Gloucestershire-based international and world class event rider Harry Meade.

Upon knocking on the door we were first greeted by Harry's charming wife Rosie and his delightful daughter Lily, before making it through the door I was having my teeth checked by Lily who was explaining how she would use her dental mirror to ensure that everything inside was OK! With mine and Lily's initial introductions over, Rosie welcomed me inside.

As if walking in to the home of a long standing family friend, the kettle went on and I was offered something to eat, Rosie's effortless ways of making me feel welcome and relaxed were both warm and sincere. As I sipped my coffee, Rosie and I began to natter, no sooner had we started talking, the key turned the lock and it was clear that daddy was home! Lily rushed through the kitchen into the hall to greet her father, the man himself, with a beaming white smile. Harry was home.

The family dog, Snip, trotted past, found her bed and snuggled up after what had clearly been a long day at the yard. Harry exchanged his long leather riding boots for a more comfortable pair of slippers and invited me into his sitting room.

As we began Harry told me what it was like growing up as the son of the late eventing legend Richard Meade. Harry was part of a family steeped in equestrian tradition.

"We started riding at an early age. And although

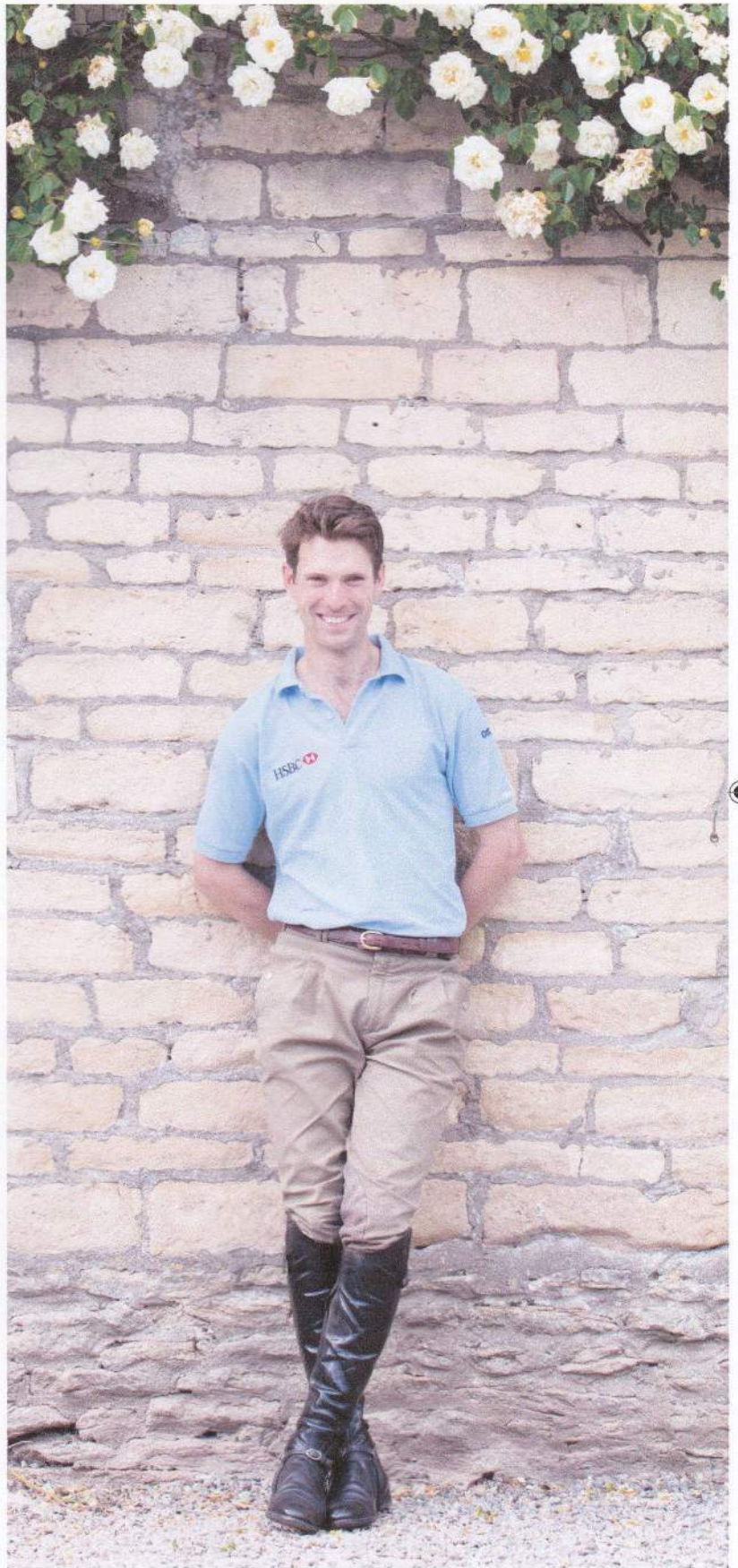
my father had already finished competing when I was very small, we had a lot of riders based with us," Harry recalls. "Matt Ryan, Lucinda Fredericks and Chris Hunnab, among many others, were all based at our yard; it was like having an extended family and was very inspiring to see them go on to the top of the sport."

Harry talked about himself, his older brother and younger sister and how they all "rode madly" during their childhood years. "We hunted and went to Pony Club", Harry went on to explain that his father always believed that riding should be fun "We weren't going off to have lessons every week, we just learnt to ride naturally." and this is something that has stuck with Harry.

It is clear to see when talking to Harry that he is a passionate equestrian. It's much more than just a competitive sport for him, it's a life style. A deep embedded passion that flows through his veins. A passion that is so apparent when talking to him, especially when we reach the subject of the world famous Badminton Horse Trials. His mention of the trials alone sent shudders down my spine, the intensity of the event and the hustle and bustle of the whole Badminton experience. As a keen equestrian fan, I think it's the pinnacle of my year by far, a holiday period spent with friends, supporting the sport's greatest combinations whilst they endure one of the toughest four star tracks in 3 day eventing.

Harry explains how tough Badminton is and how crucial it is to get the preparation right. How this one single event could make or break a potential world class horse if not approached correctly.

He tells me there is no fast track route to this level of eventing. That in fact it can be a gruelling uphill challenge, spanning as many as six to seven years of hard yet rewarding work and not only for the horse and rider, but for his entire team, from family and support network to grooms, trainers, owners, and sponsors alike. Harry tells me how a top event horse requires a balanced combination of dressage, show jumping and of course cross country, ensuring that all disciplines are well practised and come as natural as possible. Harry went on to outline



how he would take his horses cross country schooling as little as maybe only three times each year, and in fact most horses cross country schooling was done during competition and very much a case of “learning on the job”. With a safe and steady hand guiding his horses through new combinations, slowly building them in confidence over new heights, always connecting with each horse individually and riding them in such a way to respond not only to their ability, but more importantly their unique personality.

Not only does it take a well-schooled, bold, yet level headed horse to make a four star Badminton contender but maybe more crucial than any other factor is its fitness. To endure the tough test ahead consisting of 3 individual phases of Dressage, Show jumping, and in excess of 4 miles of undulating terrain a cross country, facing over 30 enormous fences with the added possibility of wet weather and heavy going, the ultimate test has got to be physical ability!

Harry explains that in order to maintain his horses fitness he works to a tight schedule planned out hour by hour, day by day. Between dressage and show jumping training, each horse works twice a week on the gallops, as a race horse would. Be under no illusion as to how hard they work, often on steep inclines and at high speeds, each time building a little on previous sessions.

When asked what Harry might look for in a potential Badminton ride he says he can generally get a feel what a horse is like in the first few moments of meeting. That not only does a good event horse need a natural athletic ability, good conformation and a will to win but also requires the right temperament. An unpredictable horse could easily be ruined if not understood and worked in such a way as to channel the horses energy.

As Harry continues to take me through parts of his journey as an international event rider I began to understand just how much commitment and determination is required to not only reach the top but to maintain at the top in the sport and this begs the question on “what is the biggest lesson you have learnt in your time in the sport? To which Harry thought quietly before responding,

‘Make sure your horses want for nothing, find the right balance between being a producer or educator of horses and being a competitor who can turn it on when it matters most.’

Harry himself has undoubtedly been on a roller coaster ride over recent years, going back to August 2013 when he suffered career-threatening injuries in a rotational fall whilst competing at Wellington’s new advanced course, shattering and dislocating both elbows. After extensive reconstructive surgery, he was left dependent on 24-hour care for the ensuing months for even the most basic needs. A period of intensive rehabilitation that followed and that with all the will in the world, hope and support from his all of his family, team and wider support network there was serious doubt over whether he would ever ride again from the medical experts.

Against all odds Harry climbed back into the saddle heavily strapped up – after four efforts of only partially successful surgery – with the uncertainty of whether his arms would stand the strain.

To the concern of his medical team and family Harry set his sights on Badminton 2014, which would later go down as one of the toughest events of all time.

After Badminton, Harry’s comeback went from strength to strength through his 2014 season especially with his world class horse Wild Lone. Following his epic performance at Badminton, Wild Lone (Alf) took Harry and his team to Aachen for the Nations Cup, where they experienced what Harry described as ‘the most amazing atmosphere he has ever competed in’, with the ecstasy of the whole competition living up to exactly what Harry had been advised it would by his peers and fellow competitors ; ‘Alf’ was one of very few to jump a clear round in the 60,000 seater show jumping stadium, a buzz that Harry stated will stay with him forever. To top it all off Harry and Alf were then called up to represent Great Britain at the World Championships in Normandy. Where in Harry’s opinion Alf gave him the best ride of his life.

This should have been the happy ending to a turbulent year for Harry and his team, but the roller coaster had no intention of stopping and



tragedy followed. Harry explained that he couldn't think of a more fitting tribute to a brilliant horse than a world championship silver medal to his name and honour.

Harry talked in great depth about how 'Alf' was, in his biased opinion, one of the world's best cross country horses, explaining that Alf was unlike most four star horses, he was not a red blooded, devastatingly brave Alfa male. Harry went on to say that such horses have a hunger for big fences; they run on adrenaline and can take a knock, oblivious to pain or confidence glitches. Instead Harry described how Alf was a complex, introverted, extremely polite, wonderfully trusting and honest horse. He explained what a responsibility riding Alf was as his unquestioning nature meant he put his trust in his rider and he minded anything but the smoothest of rides.

It is evident when talking to Harry about recent events that the past eighteen months has provided some difficult times and challenges in a number of ways both personally and professionally, but it is clear to see that the toughest of all has to have been the death of his father, Richard. Whilst we were talking Harry spoke of how his father was a wonderful role model and is the reason why, as a small boy, he set his sights on eventing.

Richard Meade was one of Britain's most successful sportsmen of his time, with three Olympic gold medals to his name. But when asked of his greatest success, Harry told us this was not in his achievements on a

horse, but in the way he conducted himself - with generosity to others, genuine interest and a real sense of integrity, always standing up for what was morally right. He cared deeply about the sport and gave so much to both the eventing and wider horse world.

We are now two months in to the new season and Harry's horses have great form on their cards, working with his fantastic network of both owners and sponsors Harry expresses that he could not do it without them!

Looking to the future Harry is well aware that horse power plays a huge factor to on-going success. In April, 'Away Cruising' an eight year old horse, like 'Wild Lone' Harry has been training since he was a four year old, made the big step up to three star level. Harry hopes he is a future star in the making.

Harry is always looking for new owners and new sponsors to join his team and after talking to him in great length it is my opinion that you would go a long way to find a better man for the job, an International superstar, a phenomenal horse man, but above all, a humble gentleman with a passion for working with the animals he loves so dearly.

For more information about Harry please check out his website at www.harrymeade.com

HARRY HAS WORKED WITH SOME OF THE BEST KNOWN SPONSORS IN THE SPORT. HE WAS SPONSORED BY HSBC FOR SIX YEARS, IS CURRENTLY A LAND ROVER AMBASSADOR AND WILL BE HELPING EQUISSAGE LAUNCH THEIR BRAND NEW PULSE MASSAGE PAD AT BADMINTON THIS YEAR.