

# Hurrah for Harry



Harry Meade lives in Luckington with wife Rosie and their kids, near his yard at West Littleton where his father Richard, an Olympic gold medallist, also trained and where Harry grew up. Sandy Thwaites meets him.

**T**O SAY I was impressed would be an understatement. Harry Meade is switched on, professional and such a good communicator – and that's before he even gets in the saddle. I wouldn't be the first to tip him as heir apparent to his former mentor, William Fox-Pitt [currently Eventing's world number one].

## Two shattered elbows...

If you've only heard one thing about Badminton Horse Trials this year, it will have been the remarkable story of how Harry, 30, confounded doctors, by coming a close third, despite only nine months earlier having destroyed both elbows in a fall that left his career in the balance.

His podium position was achieved at a Badminton which riders and pundits have described as the toughest for years. The grit and determination Harry showed to get there is more reminiscent of a National Hunt jockey than an event rider:

"The first thing I thought as I fell was 'S\*\*\*! I'm going to miss Burghley,' (the other big 4 star British event). A few months later, I worked out when I would have to start back riding to get Wild Lone fit in time for this year's Badminton.

"I didn't tell anyone (not even Rosie) about my plan but it was always my aim. And only Rosie and my head groom, Jess, were there on my first day back in the saddle. It was on Wild Lone. We did it quietly, which was essential, as I still had both arms in braces and only three degrees of flexion. Luckily I know the horse really well and he doesn't pull at all."

Luckily, too, by the time baby Charlie was born, Harry had become self-sufficient and mobile enough to start helping around the house. Particularly as he found himself having to deliver Charlie in an unscheduled home birth in the bathroom.

## World Equestrian Games

Harry is on the World Class Development Programme and would like to represent Great Britain at this year's World Equestrian Games in Normandy at the end of August. When the squad was announced at the end of June he was

**Left: Harry with Shannondale Santiago; Above: Harry riding Rosealier at Blenheim Horse Trials 2008**



selected as a reserve. Because reserves can be substituted up to two days before the event, it means Harry will be keeping Wild Lone fully prepped should he need to travel to France at the last minute. Otherwise, their target will be Burghley at the beginning of September.

Harry competes 10 horses, from youngsters through to advanced horses, and not surprisingly cites his father as a huge inspiration.

"The best piece of advice Dad has given me is to look at each horse as an individual and adapt my riding style to each of them, not the other way round. Every horse has a different way of going and temperament, so it's more of an intellectual approach which requires sensitivity and feel," he explains.

Asked to tip his own equine star of the future, he says: "Away Cruising is a serious horse. He's only a seven year-old, but he has always been consistent and is going to be in his element at top level, I think he's the type that will go all the way. But you can never rest in this sport, you always need to be looking for future horsepower and owners, to stay at the top of the game."

## Teamwork is what matters

Even before he was coming through the front door for our interview, Harry and his wife Rosie were checking in with each other on all the priority commitments and logistics for the horses. Somehow, he seamlessly managed to offer a warm welcome to me too, and I could see why the girls in the office at Blenheim Palace Horse Trials had told me earlier that he was a "firm favourite" of theirs.

Together, Mr and Mrs Meade Junior make a formidable business partnership with a highly professional yard set up. They offer real value for owners and sponsors looking to get involved with the sport.

"It's a wonderful sport and a great way to spend the weekends in some beautiful locations.

It's also very sociable – much more personal than corporate –and we love entertaining our owners at events. Paul Roger Champagne is now one of our sponsors, so we were able to celebrate suitably at Badminton," laughs Harry. Success in Harry's world is reliant on owners and it is easy to understand why Harry is such a popular choice for those wishing to venture into event horse ownership.

## Born to this life...

Given his parentage, Eton education and upbringing, Harry seems born for this. When I suggest he's a living cliché, he laughs and says: "Maybe, but I love what I do and wouldn't want to be doing anything else." An equestrian cliché he may be, but when listening to him chatting about his methods of training and the way he runs his business, his powerful mind becomes ever more apparent.

In the next breath Harry surprises me by revealing how he kept his brain alert while suffering from endless sleepless nights following his accident, listening to the complete archives of Melvyn Bragg's *In our Time* on Radio 4. I call that 'hardcore' Radio 4 listening."

## Does anything faze Harry?

"I wouldn't want to be living anywhere else but Wiltshire. I love the peace and the fact that there isn't a hint of suburbia, yet it's centrally located for access to all the competitions around the UK," explains Harry.

It's been a big year so far for this young Wiltshire family. I am sure there will be more milestones to come, as nothing seems to faze our Harry. He did quip though, as I walked out the door, that he'd rather not be finding himself delivering any more babies at home. **WL**

• Visit [www.harrymeade.com](http://www.harrymeade.com). Harry should be riding at [www.barburyhorsetrials.co.uk](http://www.barburyhorsetrials.co.uk).