

riding high with success

One of Britain's leading event riders, **Harry Meade** has made a major impact on the eventing scene and his consistent successes at the highest level have firmly established him at the top of his sport...

Growing up in a highly successful eventing family, Harry Meade was exposed to the exhilarating sport at a very early age so it's no wonder that he has become a leading light on the eventing scene, with consistent successes at the top equestrian events in the world.

"My father put me on the horse with him when I was just six months old and I grew up on an eventing yard so it was very much part of my childhood," says Harry, whose father Richard was one of the most successful riders in the world in the 1980s, having won three Olympic Gold medals.

"Riding horses grabbed me from an early age and I loved the idea of the challenge of getting to the top of the sport," says Harry, now 26, who lives near Badminton, South Gloucestershire.

His father's eventing yard became a training centre for international teams seeing the likes of Matt Ryan (a triple Olympic Gold Medallist) and Australian event rider Greg Watson passing through the yard. Soon Harry was hooked on becoming a professional event rider.

"I looked up to many of the international riders who trained with my father and wanted to be like them and get to the top of the sport."

At the age of 18 Harry competed at the Junior European Championships in Germany. It was at this stage that he started to come into his own; he finished 4th and was presented with the award for the most stylish cross-country rider. By the age of 25 he had completed the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials and The Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials a total of 10

times, winning the 'best under 25 award' at Burghley three years in a row, setting a new record.

"The highlight of my career so far was finishing in the top 10 at Badminton and at the same time being presented with an Armada dish, the award given to riders after their fifth completion. When I received it I was told that Badminton is the biggest event in the world and in its 60 year history I'm the youngest person ever to have won the Armada dish. It was a great feeling!"

Harry's top horse, Midnight Dazzler, has been his greatest partner to date.

"Sometimes difficult horses are talented but just don't get on with their riders," says Harry.

"Midnight Dazzler came to me after going through four top riders because his temperament made him very difficult to ride.

"He was erratic, highly strung with a temper but I was young and didn't have much else to ride at the time. I was at a stage in my career where it was make or break. I spent all day, every day working to get the best out of him. Eventually the penny dropped with him and there was a fairly sudden transition in his work. He is now recognised as one of the most consistent horse in the world at top level."

Harry's determination and resilience has proved very successful as a trainer to match his success in riding.

"Some riders just want to train horses or just want to compete but I get a tremendous buzz out of doing both. There is a lot of pressure in competing which I



'MY DREAM IS TO RIDE AT THE 2012 OLYMPICS AND WIN A GOLD MEDAL'

love but I also thrive on getting the best out of horses and training them to the highest level. There's a buzz about competing that drives me forward."

The world-renowned Festival of British Eventing at Gatcombe Park is one of Harry's favourite events, offering one of the most challenging courses in the sport.

"The terrain at Gatcombe Park is more interesting and undulating than most making it one of the most challenging courses in eventing," says Harry. "It's a great course for the spectator as it is set in a natural amphitheatre providing great views over the water jump and house."

Set in an idyllic Cotswolds location, The Festival of British Eventing (August 7th-9th) offers top class sporting action, family entertainment and quality shopping. The Festival takes place in the beautiful surroundings of Gatcombe Park, home of

HRH the Princess Royal, and attracts the country's top national and international riders. Spectators can bring a picnic and watch top riders and their horses being put through their paces.

So how does a rider prepare for such a course with all the potential dangers that go hand in hand with eventing?

"You have to genuinely believe that you are prepared for anything that may be thrown at you on the day, from the weather to unexpected challenges on the course.

You have to have a confidence that prepares you for anything so you're not phased by things going against you and you remain within your comfort zone," says Harry. "My favourite discipline in Cross Country; it provides such challenges and like other adrenaline sports, offers potential dangers but that is what gives you the thrill of competing.

"There's something about competing at the top level that is so thrilling," says Harry. "Every four years I love watching the Olympics, seeing top athletes competing on the world stage.

"My dream would be to ride at the 2012 Olympics and win a Gold Medal," says Harry.

■ For more information about Harry visit www.harrymeade.com

The Festival of British Eventing presented by BETA at Gatcombe Park takes place at the home of the Princess Royal on August 7th-9th, 2009. Book Online for reduced rate admission tickets. www.gatcombe-horse.co.uk. Enquiries and telephone bookings call 0871 789 1423.