



BARBARA THOMSON



Countdown to Richfields

CLIFTON EVENTERS
PROVEN PERFORMERS

LEADING EVENT RIDER JONATHAN PAGET CONTINUES HIS COUNTDOWN TO THE RICHFIELDS THREE-DAY EVENT WITH A LOOK AT THE DIFFERENT TRAINING REQUIRED FOR EACH PHASE

Dressage

Every horse is different, and therefore each horse will need a different preparation for a three-day event, but basically you need to work out beforehand your horse's strengths and weaknesses. How far can you push them without them getting fired up? You need to know when to back off, and establish some sort of a comfort zone with your horse so if they lose their head at the event, you can get them back to neutral. Sometimes it can be as simple as putting them into a long and low outline, or doing a bit of shoulder-in to help settle them.

Ideally, you do your schooling early in the season so you don't feel the need to change anything once you get to your first three-day event. That way your horse will be confident and at his best for where he is at on dressage day, so you can get the best out of what you have.

It might pay to do a couple of local dressage competitions over the coming months so you can work on different warm-up techniques, and riding your horse a little more

in the ring to see what you can create.

Cross-country

By the time you get to the three-day event your horse should be fit and good to go if everything has gone to plan.

I like to just canter around a few one-day events quietly as schooling rounds beforehand, just working on the way my horses are travelling between the fences, making sure that they are always waiting for me and not trying to take over so I can go as fast as I want without the horse getting fired up and making bad decisions. The aim is doing it on a cool head instead of using adrenaline. Going fast is easy once you can do it slowly.

Then I like to run my horses fast two weeks before a three-day event, just to get them on the job a bit and so I can get a feel of where they are at. Again, by the time you get to your three-day event you need to know your horse's strengths and weaknesses, so you can walk the course and come up with a plan at each fence to suit your horse.

Show jumping

With luck, on show jumping day you will be in a position that you can win from – but even if you're not, you want to produce the best round possible.

Show jumping after cross-country can work well for some horses but not for others, so your warm-up is seriously important. Ideally you have had a good cross-country round the day before, so it's just a matter of keeping your horse confident and trying not to do too much before you go in, but you should always have a plan that works to get your horse jumping his best before you go in.

I like to show jump at one-day events in preparation for my three-day events, so I am not too worried about the time. I'm concentrating more on the horse's jumping technique and being able to wait and move to a fence on my command. Maybe allow the horse to have the odd 'schooling' rail; this can make your horse more rideable and allows you to be more competitive at the big events when it really matters! H&P

The Richfields three-day event has long been an innovator; and this year, in order to support young stars of the future, the CCI* class will carry no entry fee. Entries close November 12.

The class is open to riders aged 14 to 18, with much the same format and conditions as the open one-star class, and will be sponsored by Frances Stead's well-known eventing stable, Clifton Eventers, with scholarship prizes offered to the first three placegetters.

The prize The first placegetter will win a 10-day scholarship at Clifton Eventers' purpose-built base at Muriwai, north-west of Auckland, valued at \$2000. They will be allowed to bring their own horse, train with Jonathan Paget, and ride some of the Clifton event horses.

The second placegetter will spend seven days at Clifton Eventers (valued at \$1400) and the third placegetter will win a five-day scholarship (valued at \$1000). Each scholarship is to be taken up at a time mutually agreeable to the winners and Clifton Eventers, and transport to and from Muriwai is at the winners' expense.

Each of the top six placegetters will win a six-month subscription to *NZ Horse & Pony*.

Entry requirements Horse and rider both need to be registered with the NZEF for eventing. See the NZEF website, www.nzequestrian.org.nz, for details.

In order to compete at FEI one-star level, both horse and rider must have three national Novice-level qualifying results. To qualify, you must complete an event with a minimum of 50% in the dressage, a maximum of 20 jumping faults and 36 time faults (90 seconds) in cross-country, and 16 jumping faults in show jumping. These qualifications do not need to be completed as a combination. For more information, see the website www.richfieldseventing.co.nz

Next month: Jonathan continues his countdown to Richfields

