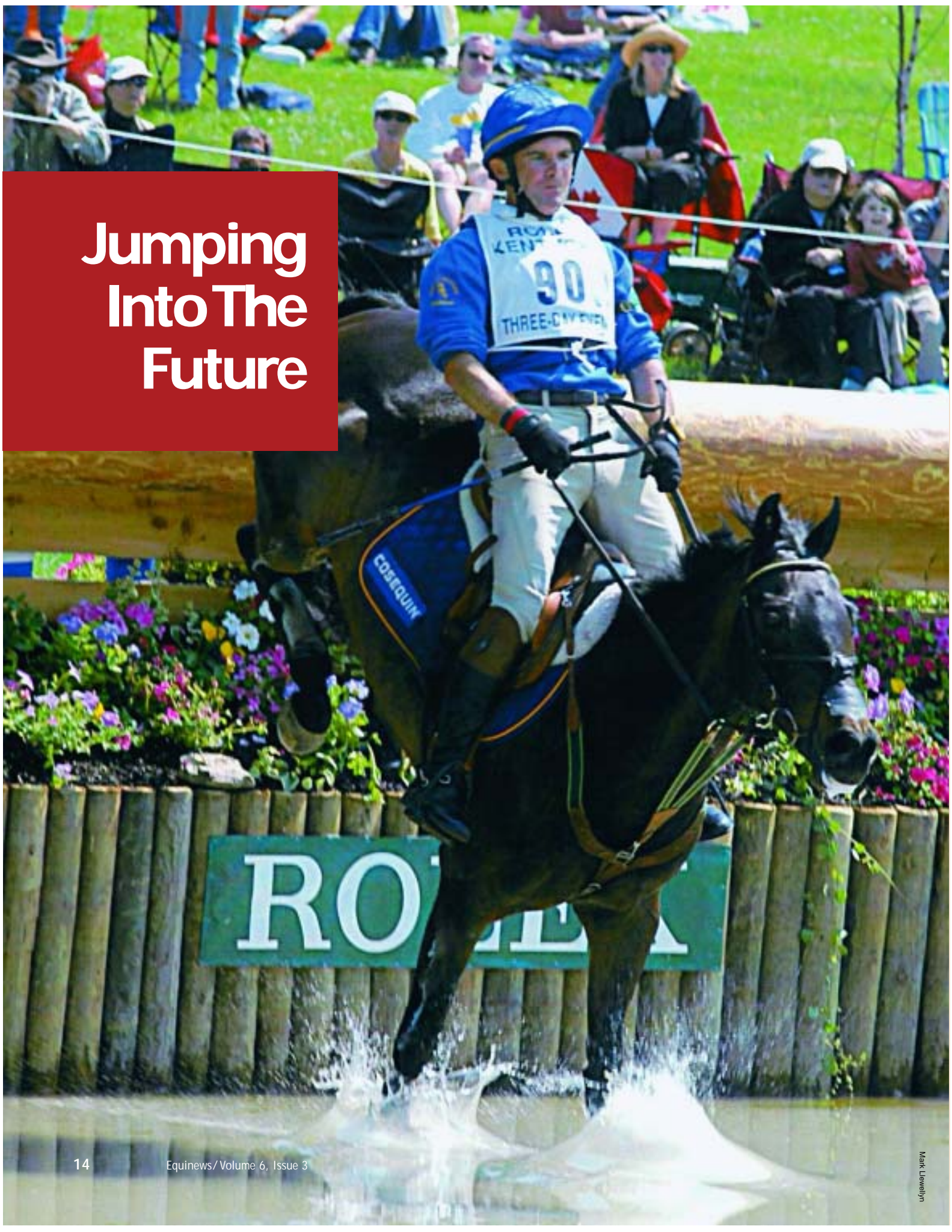


Jumping Into The Future



D Phillip Dutton attributes much of his success as an international three-day event rider to his upbringing in the outback of Australia. “I’d spend days chasing cattle, kangaroos and who knows what else, and knowing I’d have to walk home if I fell off was a huge incentive to stay on.” In all seriousness, Dutton points to his association with knowledgeable professionals as the most significant boon to his phenomenal rise to the top of an ever-growing sport.

“If you surround yourself with people who first do right by the horse, success will follow,” asserted Dutton, a two-time Olympic gold medalist. Dutton counts the nutritionists at Kentucky Equine Research (KER) and the staff at Pennfield Feeds, a member of Team KER, as individuals partially responsible for his achievements.

Dutton is a longtime user of Enduroevent Ener-G, a feed

A share of Dutton’s accomplishments no doubt reflects his ability to select young horses with the qualities necessary to advance through the upper levels of three-day eventing.

formulated by Kentucky Equine Research and manufactured by Pennfield Feeds of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Enduroevent Ener-G contains optimal fat and fiber, which gives horses sufficient dietary energy to perform the volume of work asked of them, and little dietary starch, an ingredient that has been linked to muscle disorders in some equine athletes including event horses. High levels of starch may also cause excitability in horses prone to nervousness. “Enduroevent Ener-G provides enough energy for my horses to gallop forever while being quiet enough for dressage,” commented Dutton.

A share of Dutton’s accomplishments no doubt reflects his ability to select young horses with the qualities necessary to advance through the grueling upper levels of three-day eventing. The primary consideration is soundness. “If the horse is not sound, it’s simply not going to make it. A large percentage of Olympic gold medal-winning horses are in their teens, so they have withstood years of training,” said Dutton.

The second quality of consequence is trainability, described by Dutton as the horse’s receptiveness to daily training. This characteristic depends largely on inherent disposition. For instance, a horse is allowed to be alert to changes in his surroundings and to react accordingly, but it is unacceptable for that horse to spook repeatedly at the identical object. The horse must be amenable to certain environmental changes with little or no fuss.

Closely related to trainability is athletic ability, a trait not always readily discernible in young horses. Because

youngsters often grow into their athletic ability through a nurturing and supportive training program, Dutton believes he can achieve greater success with a cooperative, less-gifted horse than one that possesses superior athleticism though questionable work ethic.

The Making of a Champion

Once he has selected a prospect, Dutton designs a schedule that will ultimately see the horse compete in an internationally recognized three-day event called a CCI (concours complet internationale).

A three-day event is comprised of three distinct phases. As its name implies, the competition is conducted over a three-day period. On the first day, horses compete in dressage,

sage, a discipline that focuses on the development of strength and flexibility of the horse with ultimate goals of self-carriage and categorical harmony between horse and rider. For the three-day event horse, dressage is imperative because it teaches the horse to be obedient and comfort-



Phillip Dutton discusses the potential of this two-year-old Thoroughbred to become a three-day event horse.

able in adjusting its stride length, a characteristic essential for success on days two and three. On the second day of the event, horses compete in the cross-country test, which showcases the speed, endurance, and jumping ability of the horses. With only a few mandatory breaks, horse and rider teams will travel over 11 miles during the course of this day and will jump obstacles as high as 4'7" and as wide as 11'6". The final day of competition is devoted to stadium jumping, a test that proves horses possess the appropriate fitness and control to negotiate a course of obstacles the day after an extraordinary endurance test.

Asterisks or stars are used to denote the difficulty of an event, with the four-star CCI (typically denoted as CCI****) being the most challenging. Only a handful of events, including the Olympic Games, are given the four-star designation worldwide.

Dutton begins working with horses at an early age. By the time the horse is four years old, however, he has created a rock-solid foundation built upon trust and confidence, two indispensable qualities that will be vital in years to come. As the horse becomes more and more educated on the flat, Dutton will incorporate small jumps and gymnastics into the program, gently molding the horse into an all-around athlete.

The following year the horse will participate in several horse trials, competitions that usually combine all three phases of a three-day event into a shorter timeframe, usu-

over several seasons. Following an international three-day event, horses are often given several weeks of downtime. In fact, some are given complete turnout until the fitness regime for the next competition must begin.

Breed Differences: Does It Matter?

Throughout his three-day eventing career, Dutton has had success with several Thoroughbreds including Simply Red, Cayman Went, and his two Olympic gold-medal winning mounts, True Blue Girdwood and House Doctor. He supposes Thoroughbred breeding will continue to have a profound influence on future stars of the sport despite the fact that the focus of the three-day event has shifted somewhat in recent years. Dutton described events of yesteryear as "serious endurance tests," but today the speed and endurance phase is shorter, thereby placing more emphasis on other elements of the competitions. As the actual miles covered on the second day of competition become fewer and fewer, the jumping efforts and the technical questions regarding how to approach those obstacles have increased in difficulty.

Another facet of the three-day event that has risen in importance is dressage. When compared to their buoyant warmblood peers, most Thoroughbreds are simply average movers, concedes Dutton. Will the significance of dressage alter the present course of discipline-specific breeding,

It is not unusual for horses to compete at this highest level for several years, well into their teens, but a considerable amount of maintenance and discipline is required to keep a horse healthy and competitive.

ally one or two days. Horse trials are not as physically demanding as three-day events and offer opportunities to refine skills in a competitive atmosphere. When fit and sound, a horse is able to compete in several horse trials annually. The horse will continue competing in horse trials until he demonstrates the need to be challenged further.

As a six-year-old, a horse may compete in its first three-day events, most likely a CCI* in the spring and a CCI** in the autumn. Because an actual three-day event requires more preparation time and an extended break afterward, horses usually only compete in one or two per year. The following year, as a seven-year-old, the horse can conceivably run his first CCI***, assuming he handled the challenges of the previous season well.

By the time the horse is eight years old, he is ready to contest his first CCI****. It is not unusual for horses to compete at this highest level for several years, well into their teens, but a considerable amount of maintenance and discipline is required to keep a horse healthy and competitive

inspiring the infusion of warmblood genetics? Probably not, according to Dutton. While warmblood crosses may fare well in the dressage phase, they may not possess suitable endurance, even for the shorter speed and endurance courses today. In the end, a "good-galloping horse," regardless of the breeding, is essential.

Kentucky Equine Research purchased several Thoroughbred yearlings in the fall of 2002. One of the primary reasons for acquiring these horses was to investigate changes in bone tissue during growth and exercise. KER nutritionists are looking forward to presenting the exciting results of this research to the horse industry in the future. As the KER researchers wrap up these studies, the question of what to do with the now two-year-old geldings was broached. While they would always have a home and a use at the research facility, Dr. Joe D. Pagan, founder of KER, enlisted Dutton to evaluate the horses in early April to determine if their future may include a career in three-day eventing. ☺☺

The Horses— In Dutton's Words

Olympic champion Phillip Dutton evaluated several horses owned by Kentucky Equine Research in the spring. Pictured below are three two-year-olds and Dutton's comments about each.



Barney

Lineage: With Approval x Elle Lea by Elmaamul (Diesis)

Date of Birth: April 26, 2001

Weight: 935 pounds

Height: 15.2 hands

This guy is certainly the right color—gray! Although a well-balanced gelding, he isn't built particularly uphill. Ideally, I would like for him to come up more at the withers and be a bit stronger through the shoulder. When asked to move off, he exhibits loose, free action, moving across the ground with relative ease. He does not slam his feet to the ground, a sign that a horse may not be well suited for higher levels of three-day eventing. I believe this gelding may have a future in the sport.



Sam

Lineage: Repriced x Irresistible Imp by Imp Society (Barrera)

Date of Birth: April 18, 2001

Weight: 946 pounds

Height: 15.3 hands

My first impression of this horse is positive. He has a huge shoulder, a long neck, and is built uphill, which will enable him to better find his balance. When a horse has a longer neck, I think riders feel safer. He has a great expression with a bright eye. On the move, he is quite light off the ground, which will cause less concussion to his legs. He also shows sufficient bone for his size. Overall, I think this horse has real potential as a three-day event horse.



Larry

Lineage: Barkerville x A Golden Rose by Strike The Gold (Alydar)

Date of Birth: April 30, 2001

Weight: 917 pounds

Height: 16.01/2 hands

This is the tallest, leggiest horse of the group. He is fine-boned, and his long pasterns will likely give a comfortable ride. Those pasterns may predispose him to ligament problems, though. He is also slightly back at the knee (calf-kneed), which is a bit of a deficiency for horses that must work at speed on a regular basis. This gelding is a beautiful mover with quite nice action, even if he does paddle out a bit.