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Countdown to Richfields

CLIFTON EVENTERS
 PROVEN PERFORMERS

LEADING EVENT RIDER JONATHAN PAGET CONCLUDES HIS COUNTDOWN TO THE RICHFIELDS THREE-DAY EVENT WITH A LOOK AT TROTTING UP AND CROSS-COUNTRY RECOVERY

The first difference you will notice at a three-day event compared with a regular horse trial happens right when you get there – the arrival inspection!

Usually, all you have to do is to take your horse to the designated area with his registration book. The event vet will then formally identify your horse, take his temperature and heart-rate. He or she will keep your ID book until the end of the event, so don't forget to pick it up before you go.

Trotting up

Firstly, you need to turn your horse out to his best; washed and plaited as if going into the dressage ring. You can use any other turnout tricks you have, and you should be dressed to impress, as you want the ground jury to know you're taking it seriously!

Before the event, make sure your horse knows how to trot alongside you, in a forward trot but without running away from you. You don't want them to get unbalanced and look uneven, or to have to drag them along. It's always a good idea to carry a hoof pick so you can clean out the hooves just before it's your turn.

The steward will call out your number (trot-ups are done in back number order) and you walk up to the first marker, which is normally a couple of pot plants. Stand in front of your horse while the jury look at him to make sure everything is in order. When they give the word, walk a few metres to the next marker, then trot all the way to the marker at the end, come back to walk and turn your horse around by turning him away from you on the right. Trot back past the ground jury, then wait to hear whether your horse has passed!

A quick recovery

It's seriously important that you give your horse every chance to recover well from cross-country day. Your work definitely isn't over once you canter through the finish flags; it could be the start of a long night!

Technically, you're allowed to keep icing your horse till 11pm and you can start again at 5am, so once your horse has recovered in the finish box and the vets and stewards let you go, take your horse back to the truck and look him over for any injuries, then start icing! Check for any cuts, make sure all the shoes are on properly, check for an over-reach... something like that could make your horse obviously lame in the morning if it's not attended to.

Even if you don't find anything, you should still ice the legs, especially in front, and monitor how long it takes for the ice boots to warm up. Check whether one gets warm quicker than the others.

There are couple of different types of ice boots. The easiest are probably the Velcro ones which have pockets on the inside that you fill with ice, then you just wrap them around their legs.

The most effective – but they can also be a little tricky to get your horse to stand in – are the elephant boots. They are made out of rubber and your horse stands in them, then you fill them with ice and water. With these boots you can ice the whole leg and foot, and you can monitor for any excess heat by putting a full bag of ice in each boot and seeing if one melts quicker than the others.

Normally, we ice for 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off, and maybe take the horse for a stroll and pick of grass in between. Then we trot them up on an even surface before they go back on ice. If the horse is looking good



BARBARA THOMSON

Some extra things to take to a 3DE

- Because you need to trot-up again before show jumping, take along a couple of spare shoes, with stud holes in them, just in case your horse throws one. It's much easier for the event farrier if you already have a shoe that fits.
- Don't forget to take gear to the finishing box before your cross-country; a couple of easy-to-carry buckets, sponges, scrapers and maybe a sweat rug. Most riders have someone organised to help them in the finishing box, and you will need to organise to have ice available.
- A set of ice boots – borrow them if you don't have any – to use after cross-country, back at your truck.

different; you need to know how much you can trust yours.

The show jumping order will go from last place to first place, so hopefully you're in a good position so you can watch a few riders go before you, and get an idea of how tight the time is, watch how the distances work and if there is particular fence that keeps coming down. Ideally, you can do that with your coach.

after two sessions, I stop icing.

Take your horse for a couple of walks before you get locked out of the stable area so they don't stiffen up too much, and then in the morning check them well before the trot by taking them for a walk and trot. Get someone experienced to watch and make sure they are sound; don't just take them straight out of the box to the trot-up! Chances are they will be a little stiff after the previous day's efforts.

If all goes well and your horse passes the trot-up, you can then get on with the job of show jumping. Don't forget, when you get on your horse to warm them up, they might be a little stiff from cross-country, so you need to be a little sympathetic by giving them the time to loosen up before you start jumping them, and not jump any more than you have too. You want them a little on the fresh side if you can, as long as they're not going to be silly. Every horse is

Course walk with Jonathan

If you would like someone to walk the course with and bounce some ideas off at Richfields, there will be a time organised where I will do a group course-walk for the cross-country a day or two before.

I am looking forward to working with the placegetters of the Clifton Eventers CCI*J class that come out to our base! Good luck, and I hope you get the best out of your horse or pony! H&P

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