

# Countdown to Richfields

LEADING EVENT RIDER JONATHAN PAGET CONTINUES HIS COUNTDOWN TO THE RICHFIELDS THREE-DAY EVENT WITH A LOOK AT THE ALL-IMPORTANT CROSS-COUNTRY WALK

CLIFTON EVENTERS  
PROVEN PERFORMERS

Walking the course can sometimes be more of a social gathering than anything else, which is part of the sport, but it's important that you get the job done first! You need to give it the attention it requires. If you can't picture each and every fence and combination, and know your plan for every one of them, after your final course walk, then I'd say you haven't walked the course enough.

At a three-day event there is a lot more time to walk the course than at a one-day horse trial, so I normally try and walk my course at least twice properly from start to finish, and then do a final walk on the morning of cross-country day. The first one or two times you go around, it's a good idea to walk with your coach so you can come up with a plan together to suit your horse. Get them also to help you measure the course for the minute markers.

The morning of cross-country you should walk the course on your own, with no distractions, on the exact line you plan to ride it. If there is a hole, big rock or stick in your path then you need to know about it!

Things to think about while walking your course:

- The first time you walk the course, take note of your first impression of each fence. Your horse doesn't get a chance to walk the course; the first time he sees the fences will be when you're asking him to jump them!
- If you can work out from your number order roughly what time you will be going cross-country, you should try and walk it at the same time, a day or two before, to get an idea of where the sun will be and if it will affect any of your fences. It's better to work that out beforehand, or you could get to the fence and find it's really hard to see!
- Even if you're planning to go straight, you should always know the options in case things don't go to plan. Your horse might get a fright at a certain fence and so you may need to take an option later to make sure of a clear round.



*Make sure you have a plan for each obstacle*

- Always keep your eye out for a shorter route or better path. Don't limit yourself to the obvious route. There is nearly always a way to save your horse a little time without being crazy!
- Think about where people are most likely to be standing, as some horses can be a little funny about jumping towards a crowd. You can't change where people stand, but (depending on the fence) you might be able to jump it in a way that takes the crowd out of the background, or at the very least you can come a little stronger in the approach! People don't stand at the boring jumps; it's always the difficult ones they want to see!
- If you have time before you go, try and get out and watch the fences you're

worried about, to see how the distances are working and how the horses are reading the fences.

- Discuss with your coach or some of the more experienced riders what studs to use. It's best to have your horse reshod 10 days before the event, to minimise the risk of foot soreness.
  - Make sure you organise people to be waiting in the finish box for you with buckets, ice, sponges, scrapers and whatever else you plan to use to cool your horse down.
- Cross country day is supposed to be fun! Being prepared and having a plan to stick to will make for a less stressful day and allow you to focus on the your job H&P

The Clifton Eventers CCI\*J class at this year's Richfields three-day event will carry no entry fee. The class is open to riders aged 14 to 18, and offers scholarship prizes to the first three placegetters. ENTRIES CLOSE NOVEMBER 12.

## The prize

The winner will win a 10-day scholarship at the Clifton Eventers 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](http://www.nzequestrian.org.nz), for details. Both horse and rider must have three national Novice-level qualifying results. For more information, see the website [www.richfieldseventing.co.nz](http://www.richfieldseventing.co.nz)