



COVER STORY



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Paul Tapner reveals

Last year's Badminton winner explains why sleep is a waste of time, how he could apply sunscreen professionally and his love of DIY

First & last

WHAT is your first... memory of riding?

Random pony rides on family holidays. I grew up in the city in Sydney, but aged seven I started weekly lessons at a riding school. I'd just about had enough of that when my parents rented a horse for me to ride at Pony Club.

When did you first... choose eventing?

In my Pony Club days, at 13, when I was talent-spotted by Peter Taylor. He wanted a break for a year and lent me his advanced eventer Look Sharp, who was winning everything on the Australian circuit. It was a surreal experience. I won plenty, except the big one — the national junior championships. I was out-and-out favourite, so both Peter and I were pretty disappointed.

What would be your first... choice of music on a long journey?

Cold Chisel, or any other Aussie rock band. I regularly torture my wife Georgina, kids and staff in the lorry with my singing, and I make them learn all the words.

When did you first... ride for your country?

Officially, this year. I had been aspiring to do so for a very long time. It was

always the case that to get on the Australian team you had to be not just the best in the country, but the best in the world.

What would be your first... choice of alternative career?

Once, on holiday in Hawaii, I saw a guy whose job it was to spray sunscreen on beautiful people. I could do that. I've got a good eye for a fine body.

When did you first... appear in Horse & Hound magazine?

After winning Bramham CCI*** in 2000 with Highpoint. It made me feel fairly invincible.

When did you first... jump a five-bar gate?

The Australian version is a rail on top of a 44-gallon oil drum. I did that before I was in my teens on a horse belonging to my instructor, Vivienne Lander.

When did you first... face major disappointment?

In 1995, when my advanced horse Champagne Phillip broke down badly. I had it in my mind that he'd get me on to the 1996 Olympic team, at a young age. I'm more philosophical, or perhaps thicker-skinned,



Inonothing (pictured) gave Paul his first Badminton win in 2010

nowadays, but at the time it really made me ponder life in general.

When did you last... make a fool of yourself?

Last month, in front of my staff at our work Christmas party. It got a bit messy once all the clients had gone home. I won't give much away, but it involved me unintentionally head-butting the floor!

When did you last... do DIY?

I'm really Bob the Builder stuck in a rider's body. I've been on the end of a jackhammer since the season finished and I love cutting, welding and bashing metal and steel — real boys' stuff.

When did you last... get scared?

I only get scared when I watch my children ride,

because they're far too fearless and just want to copy me and Georgina. Now I know what I put my parents through.

What is the last... thing you think of before going cross-country?

Breathe...

When did you last... have a sleepless night?

Regularly, because I'm an insomniac. It's not that I'm stressed. I just think that sleep is a waste of time. Six hours a night is average for me, but, having said that, I'm not a morning person.

When did you last... get some good news?

In November, hearing that I had finished fifth in the HSBC FEI Classics series. The wheel fell off my four-star campaign after Badminton, but by sheer luck I hung on to fifth.

When did you last... feel like giving up?

Probably in December, looking at my bank balance and the snow. If I ever get really unmotivated, I take a day off.

When did you last... take a risk?

My whole life is about taking risks in business — financially and with horses. As a young lad I was into adrenalin sports such as abseiling and rock-climbing, so it's in my nature to live life on the edge. *H&H*

My secret weapon

A Market Harborough. For a young horse, it's like putting on the stabiliser wheels. It can be adjusted instantly to work all the time or rarely. If you're clever with it, it will only come into action when it's needed. It's one piece of kit in my tackroom that I find particularly helpful for training young or difficult horses, and inexperienced riders.



A horse I'd love to own... LA BIOSTHETIQUE-SAM

WHY not aim for the top? I'd choose La Biosthetique-Sam FBW, the 2010 world eventing champion. I like him because he wins. The horse is quite pony-like to look at, but when competing he's so convincing and effortless — he's out there ahead, while the rest are just fighting for the minor placings.

As a rule, I don't like to take over a ride on an advanced horse, but, as a competitive rider, who wouldn't want La Biosthetique-Sam on their team? If somebody's got deep pockets and shares the same dream as me, give me a call — we'll sort something out!



The pony-like La Biosthetique-Sam