



JUMPING RUSTICS WITH RICHARD

This issue we join event rider and Dodson & Horrell Brand Ambassador Richard Jones at a cross-country schooling session to discover the best way to tackle those rustic fences. Emily Bevan writes

Schooling is training and competition is the exam



Your warm up is very important. Spend some time ensuring your horse is listening and utilise plenty of transitions



TURN TO P18



mini biogs

RICHARD JONES

International eventer, Richard is based in Rutland with his wife Victoria, a dressage rider, and two children. He has been placed in the top 10 at several 5* competitions, most recently finishing sixth at Chedington Bicton Park aboard Alfie's Clover

MILLION 55

A six-year-old gelding, by Emillion out of K-Nambia, Richard has been riding Million 55 for the last few months stading in for pregnant owner, Sophie Meers. Richard and 'John' won three BE100 classes on the bounce before finishing second in the novice at Norton Disney in their last run of the season

Right—Give the horse plenty of time to understand the question, here we made sure he had plenty of time to see the ditch and work it out

“Find an area to warm your horse up and give him time to settle,” Richard begins. “Take your time so the horse comes to you rather than demanding his attention, don’t expect him to be too focused too quickly. Do lots of transitions and changes of direction, make sure he is listening and on the aids on the flat in walk, trot and canter before you think about jumping.”

“It’s important your horse is in the right frame of mind before you start jumping. It wouldn’t worry me to come up to the cross-country field for 45 minutes, then go back to the yard having not jumped anything, particularly if it’s a young horse. I want my horses to be here relaxed and enjoying it and it may take a couple of attempts to get to them to that stage.”

“It’s easier for me to say that because I have a cross-country facility at home but I’d say to other people go out in your local fields and make sure you can walk, trot, canter, pull-up, turn right, turn left etc. You’d be amazed at the number of people who can’t do that in an open space and only ride in their school or down a road on a hack.”

“If you have a cross-country schooling session coming up and you’re worried your horse is going to be fresh then plan your week around it. Maybe he needs 20 minutes on the lunge and 10 minutes on the horse-walker before you go, maybe he has a really good ride the day before or he goes out in field for the two nights previously, work out what works best for your horse.”

“When you’re ready to jump some practise fences, assess which ones are best to use. Which are the right size and best-suited to your horse and the course you’re about to do? Get into a jumping canter and make sure you have a good level approach to your first practise fence which should be something simple like a log.

“Do it a couple of times so you’re confident in what you’re doing, it’s very important that your horse is on your aids and listening to you. Then go on an easy angle each way over the same fence.”

“Tailor your warm-up to your horse and make sure it goes well. If your horse is unruly ride away from the fence, trot and halt, don’t punish him. If he’s lazy then land and ride away.”

“The most important thing is to make sure your horse understands the exercise. Start in trot over small fences and ensure the horse

Right—Start off simple, we started over some small barrels

Facing page—After the barrel we added in a mound, taking a pause at the top





"Jumping a fence into the water is a bravery question so it requires a little bit of set-up. Each time I came to the water I focused on having a good quality canter with enough energy to jump the fence on the way out even if I wasn't jumping one..."



Below—Before introducing a fence near water, make sure you trot and canter through the water a number of times so your horse is comfortable

knows very early what he's jumping. We started with something simple – a barrel – then up and down a mound to another barrel.

"I did a transition on top of the mound before the second barrel to regain control, to make sure the horse was listening to me and to give them time to assess what was coming next. The more control you have, the less set-up you need. If you have super control and more experience, the theory is you can go faster with little set-up. If you're riding a green horse or a horse that finds set-up difficult then you need more set up and to set up earlier."

"We built up to jumping the barrels in canter but continued to rebalance at the top. We varied the pace and introduced a halt after jumping the second barrel to ensure we kept control and the horse continued to listen."

"When we moved on to jump the ditch – which had a slight gradient in and out – we started in trot to ensure the horse understood what we wanted him to do.

"The approach is really key – have balance and make sure he can see the ditch early. If you're in the correct balance it gives the horse time to arrange his feet at the base of the

ditch. A lot of people feel they need to drive their horses to make them jump the ditch but for me it's about giving him chance to look and understand what he needs to do and have the confidence in me to do what I'm asking."

"We jumped the ditch both ways in trot, building up to landing in canter and popping over a little hanging log 3-4 strides after the ditch. Distance is irrelevant at that height – if you're in the correct balance and have the correct speed the horse should be more than athletic enough to jump it."

"Once we were confidently jumping the ditch and log we progressed to jumping a log before the ditch too. In order to do that it was important to create a powerful, energetic coffin canter – a good set-up only comes from a great canter.

We sat him up so he understood what we required him to do, put our leg on and rode forwards so he had the power and confidence to jump what we were asking."


"We then moved on to the water and began by trotting, then cantering through it several times in a strong balanced canter. Once we were happy and confident doing that we jumped a little log on the way out, then added

one on the way in.

"Jumping a fence into the water is a bravery question so it requires a little bit of set-up. Each time I came to the water I focused on having a good quality canter with enough energy to jump the fence on the way out even if I wasn't jumping one."

FINAL THOUGHTS

"Remember schooling is training, competition is the exam – many people do it the wrong way. Often the horse doesn't know what he's doing and then he starts running out and stopping. If you slow everything down and break it down so the horse has time to think and understand what he's doing you won't have those problems."

"I want my horses to want to jump as much as I want them to do it. Training them in that way means that they want to be with you, then they will help you out and step in rather than out when under pressure." 



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