

Young rider and gold medalist **Emily Llewellyn** entertains us with her eventful first experience of Badminton 2009 at four\* level. After winning 'Best First Timer', she looks forward to 2010's event with newfound confidence



**WHAT A WEEK!** Where do I start? Well, Badminton 2009 has to be one of the biggest, if not the biggest highlight of my career so far. It was my first CCJ4\* and it was also Society Spice's (Riz) first four\*, so we were both heading into the unknown!

I set myself some clear goals in the months running up to the event so that I had something to focus on. Without realising I was psychologically preparing myself for all of the challenges Badminton would ask of me and Riz. I can't tell you how many times I went down the centre line of my school at home, imagining I was entering the main arena, riding as if I was just about to do the best of my life! I also have to confess, I spent many nights imagining myself galloping out of the start box and over the first fence rather than sleeping! Yet, it meant I felt so prepared when I finally got there. I was so ready for the atmosphere and the crowds, purely because I had gone over it a thousand times in my head!

I was the youngest competitor at Badminton, at the age of 19, and it was a real honour to be competing there in its 60th year. When we arrived we got Riz settled into his amazing stable; we had our own name plate on the door and on XC day we were given our own personalised XC numbers, all of which I've kept as souvenir! One of the first jobs on Wednesday was to go and meet Caroline at Moleth, who had very kindly agreed to lend me two trot-up outfits for Badminton. When I saw the shop I was very excited; it was stunning! Caroline picked out two amazing outfits for me which were both beautiful. I felt very honoured to be wearing the clothes and

## Four\* triumph

felt like a million dollars. Fortunately I managed to keep them clean and scotcher-free, a mean feat considering Riz's efforts to bite me at the trot up! My dressage was on Friday afternoon which suited me as I had Thursday and Friday morning to watch tests and make sure I knew the movements of the test down to the last hoof print! Riz seemed to know it was an important test and, walking out of the arena, I saw I had achieved my goal by scoring 48.3 and that was a great feeling! Overnight my score left me in 12th place which I was very pleased with.

*Riz found parading in the arena very exciting and nearly ran over a couple of cameramen!*

When I got on Riz for the XC it was like putting on an old pair of boots and we were as much of a team as ever. I felt so settled going cross country and so we had a really confidence-giving, comfortable round. Riz started to get tired towards the end but he kept jumping beautifully. We came in clear with 10.8 time faults but, to be honest, in my first year I didn't care at all about a few time faults. Overnight we dropped to 20th place. To still be in the top 20 after XC day and to be jumping on Sunday with the top 20 competitors was a great achievement for me.

Sunday morning Riz was as fresh as a daisy and felt as loose and supple as the day we arrived. I had to parade in the main arena about five minutes before I actually entered the arena for my show jumping. Riz found this very exciting and nearly ran over a couple of cameramen in the process! Inside, he jumped his heart out for me and tried so hard he actually nearly jumped me off coming out of the double. He literally catapulted himself over it!

I finished 22nd in the end which I was still pleased with, but winning the prize for the best placed British rider under the age of 25 and best first timer was even better.

Having started high after dressage, and still having quite clear XC with one fence down, gave me incentive. I know next year I could jump double clear and go faster. Roll on May 2010, because I think I might have a serious 4\* horse sleeping in my yard! 🐾