

Young rider and gold medallist **Emily Llewellyn** keeps us up to date with all her preparations as the season gets into full swing



JANUARY AND FEBRUARY have brought interesting weather conditions to make preparation for the season trickier! Having our school snowed under for a week did, however, create a very good excuse for using riding time to storm around the fields on sledges and even be towed behind a 4x4 on a rubber doughnut!

The first couple of months of 2009 have also brought world-class training, which has been really fantastic. Having been off the programme for a couple of years it was really nice to be back, and to get training from top trainers who I hadn't seen for a while. I took different horses to each session and benefited hugely from this early help. It was also a good way of taking the edge off the horses before we took them out to various local shows to set them up for the season.



My first 'competitive' outing was to Royal Leisure for some show-jumping practice. I had a really good day and came home having not had a pole down all day, with eight double clears... a good start! I then decided to endure some much-dreaded pure dressage on fresh event horses. I went to Oldencraig and competed in classes ranging from Novice to Advanced Medium. I won six classes that day, two of which were Advanced Mediums, on my hopeful Badminton ride, Society Spice, which I was really pleased with. I do have a confession to make, though: the weather forecast was shocking that day, so I think there was a maximum of about five people in each class! If I leave that minor detail out it sounds like I had an amazing day, so you have to admire my honesty!

I then went to an Equistro JAS competition at Merrist Wood. This was partly just for another outing, but also because I have been invited to compete in the British Open Cross Country this year. I did not have a clue which horse I would take, so I thought JAS would give me a better idea.

I haven't done a JAS for a few years, probably since my pony days, so it was great fun! I must confess I was a little rusty with the whole cross-country being indoors, so I didn't reach the highest of speeds to fight for the first few ribbons but the horses all

Let the season begin!

went really well and everyone enjoyed it. I then entered two horses for the British Open Indoor Cross Country qualifier at Addington to get a little more practice in, as I was still unsure which horse would be most appropriate for the competition at the British Open. I decided to enter Balloo IV.

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owned by Caroline Paul, because he had showed lots of promise at JAS and I also entered an extra space so I could decide on a horse to ride at a later date. Next thing I knew, I found myself sitting in a lecture a few days before the competition at Addington, wondering if I could borrow a horse to do the British Open on! All my others get a bit hot with going against the clock indoors and then take some time to settle again. Then it suddenly occurred to me, we may have had the perfect horse sitting at home all along. Since Christmas, JPN rider Amelia Green has joined the team to event from our yard and owns the most delightful, gentle giant 'Grimley Fien'dish'. Grimley is an absolute poppet, and having never sat on him I asked Amelia if she would consider lending him to me for Addington, and she kindly said yes. I rode Grimley on the two days we had left before Addington; he was great fun and I loved him. He continued this good form at Addington, where both he and Balloo were fantastic. As the British Open looms ever closer I am very fortunate to have two possible rides!

I also sent off my Badminton entry a couple of weeks ago. Sad as it may be, I was very excited about the whole thing and even made sure I went and posted it myself. I'm praying I get in, and that Riz and I get there in one piece, because he feels fantastic and I am already getting myself psyched up for it!

Bring on the season! 