

Equimec Rider of the Month

Megan Jones



Photo: Peter Jones

This month's rider of the month is Megan Jones, who with two World Cup qualifier wins – in New Zealand and Sydney – is way out in front on the World Cup leaderboard. This comes on top of Megan's wonderful performance at the Olympic Games in Hong Kong – and each time, riding Kirby Park Jester, the home bred horse that Megan broke in and took all the way to an Olympic medal. Megan is one rider right at the top of her game...

Is it hard being an elite athlete and still having a 'normal' life?

"It is really hard. I think you've got to make sure that you surround yourself with people who understand that you don't have much time... like my partner Steve is really good with me because he understands that to spend 'quiet' time with me involves coming to a big event where I've only got a few horses. Other than that, it is sort of crazy at home, it is hard, and I do go through times when I get it all right, and then big chunks where it is all horses, all work. I figure I can live like that until I find that I am tired, and when it is not so much fun – then you just cut back and do the things you like to do, like teach more, or ride less. You do it until you find it is too hard, then change things..."

But you've always had a strategy of going off and riding motor cycles and having holidays...

"Definitely, I have to force myself to do those sorts of things, and it is a case of forcing myself, and making the time – doing it in the off-season when I know I have some time to actually make it happen. Whenever I go away, I try to have a slow time – after the event, go hiking or something so I can have fun..."

Are you still as motivated as when you started?

"More so, because I think now I've got more skills and understand so much more, I feel I am at a point in my riding where I am starting to make sense of all the hundreds of lessons I've had over the years. I can make things happen quicker, it takes less time, and therefore it is more exciting. I'm still absolutely loving it."

You never wake up in the morning and say 'oh, I really don't want to go down to the stables and start riding...'

"I must admit that I slept in this morning because I haven't had a day off in three weeks. I was in Melbourne on Saturday for a day's school, then I had a coaching conference, and I couldn't teach all the lessons I normally teach, so I had to teach all day Sunday which is supposed to be my day off. Today I woke up with a really sore neck and a really sore head, I'm not feeling great, so I rang the girls at 7 and said, I won't be there until 11. I'll stay inside, have a cup of tea, do some stretching, do a bit of housework, and then go out there, and just know that today I've got to ride a few less horses, and they can take a few on the hill. Sometimes I just have to take a couple of hours, and for me, that's enough – just sometimes I go, 'I really can't stick to that schedule', and I'll just change it around a little bit."

What is the next big deal – the World Cup Final?

"Well obviously that was to be the plan to take Jester to the Final, however I'm not going, because we spoke to IRT and it is three months quarantine to get home from Poland. Even though it is an EU country, AQUIS don't see it as a recognized EU country – health wise it is not up to standard, so the horse would have to do 60 days in a recognized EU country, and 21 of those days has to be in a quarantine facility, then once back in Sydney, another 21 days there, so it is pretty much three months quarantine, and I can't afford the time to stay in England with him for that much time to make sure he gets his physio, and gets shod properly and so on. Basically I would never just leave Jester for that amount of time on his own, and you can't work them properly in quaran-



Each Equimec Rider of the Month receives six syringes of Equimec in recognition of their achievement.



tine. He's 15 now and to give him that much time off, would not be right, especially without the normal day-to-day care we give him. It would be a disaster, he'd just get old and stiff. A World Cup final would have been that much fun, and I had a pretty good chance of winning, but the bigger picture is World Games next year, then Olympic Games. He wouldn't get home until Christmas time, and I just go – 'you know what? I've been overseas, I've competed over there, I can probably do without that much risk on this horse'. I really had fun riding him in the qualifiers. I sat back and said to myself, Megan if you knew the quarantine procedures before the qualifiers, would you have gone to New Zealand and run there so hard, and run so hard at Sydney? And I probably would have... why not? He's so much fun to ride.

So plans have changed again, and instead of going away to Poland and then have a little trip somewhere, we are definitely going to take a couple of weeks off around that time and go skiing or something, something different."

Do you think we'll have an Adelaide four star this year?

"Yes, I really think we will. The fund raising is going well and the riders are getting behind it – I know I'm putting in five grand, Wendy is also and she spoke to about half a dozen riders in Sydney who'll put in the same. When you think about it, if we lose our four star instead of putting in five grand, you will be up for fifty grand to go to a four star overseas. Going to Burghley or Luhmülen is going to cost you a fortune, why not help our Australian event? And it is such a great event..."