



Focus
on

In 2018 Rider magazine will be following the fortunes of Event Rider Caroline Harris. Caroline will take us behind-the-scenes with the horses she rides and produces and will pass on her top tips and advice for a successful competition season

Falko (Joey)

mini bio
Caroline
Harris

Top: Caroline at home in her school

Above: 17.1hh Joey is a lovely big fella who loves a 'smile'

Caroline is among the Top 100 ranked event riders in North West Europe and is on the World Class Equine Pathway Programme. At any one time, she has around 10 horses in her yard, and chooses to focus on that small group to ensure each gets the individual attention it deserves. She has already achieved notable successes bringing young horses up through the eventing ranks and achieving highly consistent results at international level.

JOEY'S EARLY TRAINING PROGRAMME

This issue the spotlight is on eight-year-old 'Joey' (Falko TH), a 17.1hh dark bay Dutch bred. Joey is the happiest horse in the yard, whose party trick is to smile (see picture top left)! We bought him as a just backed four-year-old in 2014.

He is rather large, being over 17hh, so I've taken my time with him. He knows how big he is and, because I am not tall, I wanted to make doubly sure the basics were in place with him.

He has always been hugely talented but as a four-to-six-year-old he was so gangly that he didn't have very good control of his limbs, so as a young horse we did plenty of transitions with him to get him thinking quickly and coordinating those long legs of his.

A typical exercise I would do with him back then was to trot a large square, then get him to walk one corner, then back to trot the short side then a canter transition in the next corner.

I would then repeat these movements to get him focusing and thinking, whilst staying straight and on my aids.

Walking a good corner also helps to train a young horse to go deep into a corner bending around your inside leg, preventing them from falling in. On the jumping front he has a massive stride so we spent our time teaching him to collect, and working on shorter distances between fences to train him to shorten. He could easily go down a distance taking a stride out, so we had to make sure that he learnt to shorten himself.

To teach him, I would put four poles on a 20m circle 90 degrees from one to the next, then trot over them, and then canter. I use this exercise a lot and deliberately vary from doing three to four strides between the poles, making sure I'm very precise as to how many strides I want.



Above: Joey initially had a tendency to jump 'too high' and worry

JOEY GROWS UP

We started competing Joey as a five-year-old, starting him off with two or three BE 90s and 100s towards the end of the season – finishing in the top 20 in all of them – but with still quite a bit to work on, as he was still very unbalanced and mentally immature. Where he was so big and weak, he found a 20m x 40m arena a little tight.

He had seven runs the following season as a six-year-old with a couple of wins in BE100s at Broadway and Portman. A step up to Novice at Tweseldown showed his greenness with ditches and with that course having quite a few he started jumping too high and began to worry. So, we moved him straight back a level to build his confidence, with a couple of nice top 10 results to finish that season.

That waiting game paid dividends in 2017 when he achieved brilliant results as a seven-year-old at Novice level. The aim was to step him up to Intermediate in 2018 and aim him at his first CCI. As I write, it's a case of

'so far, so good'. We kicked off the season with a nice (30.3) dressage, two down show jumping and a steady cross-country clear to finish ninth in a Tweseldown Novice in early March. And then a fortnight later, Joey took the step up to Intermediate at Gatcombe quite nicely, finishing a respectable 14th with a good dressage score (32.2), just one down show jumping, and another deliberately steady cross-country round.

Now, a typical week's training regime for him would be to work him in the arena for two days then take him for a long hack, and then repeat. When I'm schooling him at the moment, we're working on his 2* movements so we have started training his half passes and pirouettes.

I like to give him a day of doing pole work exercise, such as trot poles, canter poles and bounces. This keeps him supple and gives him something else to think about. I don't jump him every week as he is a very good jumper naturally, so I'd rather focus more on the poles.

Getting the hang of it at Gatcombe

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WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Joey definitely has the ability to go all the way and the exciting thing is that we have decided to syndicate him out for ownership so it will be possible for a group of owners to share in his success, watch his training and enjoy some great days out eventing on the way.

These days it's much more affordable to become an

owner in this way and keep costs down to around the level of a gym membership, or equivalent.

DOES JOEY SPARK YOUR INTEREST?

We'd love to hear from anyone who might be interested in group ownership of Joey – feel free to get in touch via our website (see right) for further details. ▶

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