

Q&A

SARAH BULLIMORE



SARAH BULLIMORE is one of Britain's top event riders, finishing 2017 seventh in the FEI world rankings. She has represented Great Britain several times in the Nations Cup Series. She is based near Keysoe on a purpose-built training and breeding facility that she and her husband Brett designed in 2000.

TRAINING THE STARS

● I once had a young horse who started jumping ditches well but had a bad experience during a BE 100 competition when he stopped in a coffin. He was a bit green going forward but I made his schooling ditch focused from then on. I took him to one course which had 16 different ditches (plain with brush, palisade, in coffin, trakehner, zigzag) and jumped them all until he was confident. A few days later I did the same at a different venue. He never looked back.

Fences such as ditches, skinnies and water complexes can be "rider frighteners". Riders can be tempted to look down into them, rather than up and ahead, conveying the wrong message to the horse and subconsciously causing him to refuse. It is an easy

How do I teach my horse to jump 'tricky' obstacles?

The event rider shares the process she uses when teaching horses to jump difficult fences, such as ditches and water

Sarah Bullimore finished seventh in the 2017 FEI world rankings. She is pictured here riding Lilly Corrine



'Allow the horse to slow, look, or stop and sniff, but not spin or turn'

Do not gallop at it in the hope that the horse will be over it before it notices; this is a sure way to encourage the horse to stop the second time.

problem to solve with patience, good training and repetition. I find the most commonplace cross-country problems are horses that do not like ditches or water, or horses that run out at skinnies or corners. If we break this down to basic aids, it's either stop/go or

steering, so the training needs to be black and white from day one.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

1 Ditches can be practised in the arena during routine schooling with three to five poles laid side-by-side, or a line of flat blocks, or a water tray, so the horse becomes used to popping over things without any height.

2 To introduce water and ditches, I would find some that is shallow and not too wide. The horse can easily hop across to gain confidence but if he happens to put a foot in, he won't frighten himself.

3 Approach any fence as such in a strong trot but ensure you are not going too fast.

4 Allow the horse to look if it needs to. I would allow the horse to slow, look or even stop and sniff, but never to go backwards or spin/turn. Use an experienced horse as a lead, or even have someone walk across on foot to reassure. With ditches, some horses find them easier to read with a rail or fence over so a nice inviting trakehner, or ditch palisade or brush, can be a good option, but again make sure it isn't too big.

5 Make sure the horse is happy and confident at each stage before progressing. **H&H**

NEXT WEEK

Consider this...

- Often, riders will try to run before they can walk by attempting a fence that is too challenging for the horse. Technicality can be built up as the horse gains confidence.
- It is far more difficult to gain the confidence of a horse that has been frightened than to instill confidence from the outset, so correct basic schooling is the key.
- There is no substitute for getting out and quietly popping over as many different fences as possible until it becomes second nature.
- A little refresher the day or so before a competition as a reminder can help.