

The Lamperd method

Warren Lamperd is an international event rider based in Berkshire, where he runs his yard White Hart Stables with his wife Suzie, who has also ridden internationally. Here, the top rider and trainer tells us more about the journey that took him to the peak of the sport

Photos by Julia Nest Photography



Warren and Suzie with Silvia the superstar

I was born on a farm in Western Australia. My father was the farm manager, but he also rode and was shortlisted for the Australian Olympic show jumping team with a horse called Four Corners, who later competed at the Montreal Olympics with Barry Roycroft. Dad used to play polo for Western Australia and he also did a lot of stock work, so horses were always in the family.

Then we moved to the east coast, where Dad ran a couple of studs and later a riding school. We finished up in Victoria in a place called Ocean Grove, where we lived the idyllic lifestyle - we had 750 acres, you could see the ocean from the farm, we would ski, play cricket and Aussie Rules and surf. It was a fantastic childhood and one I remember fondly. Just being able to do all those different activities was incredible.

My youngest brother is a national amateur champion in surfing and my middle brother has jumped around Badminton and Burghley a couple of times as well, so we've always been a competitive family.

Early competition days

I competed all the way through childhood and teens and my parents were very supportive when I was at uni, with Dad keeping the horses going for me. Mum drove us all over the place and our annual trip was to Naracoorte in South Australia for the National Young Rider Championships.

After uni, I was competing at Gawler three-day event in Australia (these days it's held at Adelaide). I was offered some riding in New Zealand so I went there for a little while. Here, I was spotted by Tinks

Pottinger who knew the Todd family were looking for riders, so she put me in touch and I came to the UK to ride for them for the season in 1996.

I decided to apply for a four-year English ancestry knowing I could get residency at the end of it. I knew I wanted to be a top rider and in order to do that, you have to go where the best riders are based. Commercially, there are better opportunities in the UK as you have more people in a smaller area.

I sold everything I could to raise funds, put my horse Bootlegger on a plane and set off to the UK. I did another season with the Todds, then worked for Blyth Tait, before making the decision to set up on my own.

I was fortunate enough to compete Bootlegger at Le Lion D'Angers in France,

which was fantastic - I had never seen anything like it. Bootlegger went on to do several top events, finishing ninth at Burghley in 1999, and we were even long listed for the Olympic Games. He was fantastic at Burghley that year as it was a really strong course, I didn't really know what I was doing, but I just sat up and rode and gave it my best shot.

Sadly, his career was cut short when I was cantering up a hill and he injured himself, so I couldn't do my first Badminton. I never got him back to full form after that. In a lot of ways that horse was my best mate because we came up the levels and travelled everywhere together, so it was disappointing, but we had a great journey.

I was busy living in Gloucestershire and trying to put my business together, which was quite a challenge. I was driving artic lorries as that was the best way I could find of making money.



Warren with Oswald the dog

Doing it our way

I met Suzie at an equine therapy centre. I don't think she liked me much at first but maybe she was intrigued by what I was aiming for and we've stuck together since.

Meeting Suzie was an important turnaround for me as it gave me a foundation and support, plus Suzie is wonderful in keeping me balanced and helping in my decision making. She also gave me the courage to say 'OK let's do it how we want to do it'. I didn't want it to

be all about getting quick results. For me, as long as the horses go well and I can feel them developing and heading in the right direction, I am happy to take my time.

There are pros and cons to this, because sometimes we might try harder and spend longer with a horse that maybe we shouldn't have, but equally we may sometimes get more out of a horse because we haven't put too much pressure on them early in their career.

Suzie's been so supportive of me and I am now keen for her to do things with her young dressage horse Luigi.

Meeting Silvia

In 2006 I went to look at a horse with Suzie, where we were greeted by a grey mare wearing a pretty little pink rug. Even though we were told 'she doesn't jump', we bought her thinking she may be a nice dressage horse for Suzie, if nothing else.

Silvia is independent and opinionated and I fell off her regularly getting her started as she had a neat buck and twist that would just put me on the floor, but patience paid off and she became a great eventer. She's not the quickest, but she keeps going. I remember competing in Saumur in a selection year over a strong track. It was torrential rain, thunder and lightning, but Silvia just kept jumping. It's a great feeling riding something that's having as much fun as you are.

For her to do what she's done is amazing



Warren built his own lorry from scratch



Peanuts the little pocket rocket

really. Galloping up winner's avenue at Burghley is tough, as she doesn't go up hills quickly and it's a long way, but Silvia gets in bottom gear and chugs her way to the top. You know you've got the Burghley ditch at the top and somehow she reserves enough energy to jump it and find her way to the finish line.

A rollercoaster ride

Highs and lows are part of the sport - it's the same for everyone. It's disappointing when a horse gets injured, but how you deal with it is integral to everything. It's interesting to watch high level riders

Interview

when they win, because it's either pure elation or they give a wry smile as they know what it has taken to get there.

Goals and ambitions

The great thing about being in the UK is that even if you're not on a squad, you can still ride at Badminton and Burghley and challenge yourself at the highest level. I still aspire to ride at the Olympics, but you have to be the right person at the right time and be selected.

My goals are really strong and some seem far away for now, but without those goals I wouldn't have stuck it through thick and thin. Those days doing galloping work in January in Gloucestershire with a frozen face and tears, and dribble coming out of your mouth because your face won't move.

When you have the right horse for the job, it's easy to get excited but you have to keep level headed and ensure you don't get too ahead of yourself. If you don't have the right horses, you make the most of what you have got and try to keep

known Andrew Hoy since I was a little kid and his approach is very methodical, too.

For me, equine fitness is important as I never want a horse to struggle around a course. I tend to go back to basics a lot, making sure the simple things are working, as those are the tools you rely on when everything is happening quickly out on course or if something goes wrong.

Often, if I have a big event coming up, I may sit on a trickier horse for a while as this can really wake up your own reactions.

I've blown dressage tests by trying to ride them perfectly the day before, but now for dressage or jumping I get the horse 'talking' to me and then try to get my best performance in the ring.

When I am jumping, I want the horse to read the question and see the distance, which will be based on the canter I have given the horse. If I know I'm going to jump then turn sharp, I don't want a big open canter, for example. As long as I don't get in the way over the fence then



Schooling Silvia at home

developing as a rider so that when the right horses do come along you're ready.

A competitive formula

There are so many different factors to consider when you're trying to get your competitive formula right, and one of those is finding the right help with your training. Personally, I like people who really understand horses. I go to Dane Rawlins for flatwork and Paul Hulburd for show jumping as they can both see where the horses will be further down the line. I have learned so much from the Todds and Andrew Nicholson and I love watching the good show jumpers like Marcus Ehning and Scott Brash. I have

the horse can't bear a grudge. If you try to control things too much it uses up mental energy, so the simpler you can make it, the less mentally tired your horse will be.

Life is a learning curve

I broke my pelvis a few years ago schooling an 'angry' horse for someone. One day I 'sorted' the rearing by turning its head to the side so it couldn't rear. The next day, the horse went to rear, I turned its head and it threw itself to the ground, landing on the left side of my pelvis. I don't go looking for that kind of thing now.

I'm looking forward to sharing my training ideas with you over the next few months.

Meet the equine stars of the stable

Silvia is a 16.1hh, 19 year old Holsteiner mare by Lancer II, who is described as the yard princess and is a real trooper.



Matilda is a 16.3hh, seven year old mare who we believe could be a real contender to go up the levels.



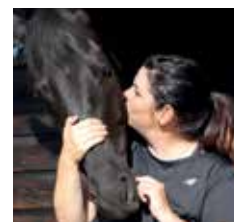
Peanuts is a 15.3hh, seven year old Belgian-bred mare, who is a real jumping machine.



Shirley is an eight year old mare. She's turned out to be a bit too careful to event but is showing promise as a show jumper.



Luigi is a five year old gelding by Glamourdale. He is Suzie's up-and-coming dressage horse and has a great temperament.



Velten is a 28 year old who was Suzie's international dressage horse and is now enjoying his retirement.



NEXT MONTH

Don't miss the start of Warren's four-part training series, starting with 'The Lamperd Method' explained.

