



# Over To You

The most capped British event horse of all time, the renowned pathfinder so often provided the start the team needed. Pippa Roome charts his brilliant career

IT is a marker of the consistent brilliance of Over To You that rider Jeanette Brakewell struggles to isolate his best cross-country performance. "I came home many times thinking that was his best round ever," she says, her mind jumping to the chestnut gelding's individual silver at the 2002 World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Jerez de la Frontera. "Jerez was the most memorable because of his own medal, but he did have some amazing rounds at Badminton."

"I watched one a few weeks ago that someone had highlighted on Facebook. You forget how easily he galloped and accelerated, he covered the ground effortlessly. If you were down on your minute markers and you had some galloping stretches, you knew you could make the time."

Over To You's cross-country prowess as Team GB's reassuring, reliable pathfinder will live long in the memory – few will forget him tackling courses all over the world, nippy and light on his feet, chestnut coat gleaming, his head with its little star held high, Jeanette perfectly in sync in the familiar red, white and blue colours.

OVER TO YOU (Jack) is a thoroughbred by Over The River, out of the Gala Performance mare Another Miller, who is a granddaughter of Native



**"The way we trained him was controversial"**

"I FIRST met Jeanette when she was coming up to old three-star [now four-star]," says dressage trainer John Bowen. "Conformationally, Over To You was an interesting horse – he's built very up in front and hollow in the back – but he was very athletic in everything he did. "Jeanette had a lot of feel and understood what I was trying to get her to do with the horse. I remember commenting to someone that I had just worked with the next phenomenon in the equestrian world."

"Over the years, I was taught by good coaches to work a horse outside the box and find the best position to put the horse into to access its whole body. "We did something controversial in that we trained Jack very deep and round to get his neck in the right place to release and build his back and get him to engage his core. He naturally wanted to be very light on his front feet – that's why he stayed sound so long, his front feet barely touched the floor – and not use the rest of his body. We made him really round and supple and only let him go into the frame the dressage judges wanted to see when he went down the centreline. "People don't understand the horse should take the contact from behind the saddle not the mouth. Until you can access the back muscles, you never get a horse working into the contact. We worked on getting him to connect back to front, to try to get him to pull a little bit. "Jack is the only horse I've ever worked with who went back to his original way of going and shape if you gave him a couple of weeks off and you had to start all over again after every holiday. "But when you have the results we got with him, you can't be frustrated. We knew the start of the process and where

misses two heart beats in every five, rather than the one in every four or five that's routine in horses. Irish event rider Jonty Evans, who was working for Tony Clegg, took on the task of re-breaking Jack, finding him well-behaved and curious. At the end of Jack's fourth year, Tony's daughter Fiona brought him for a lesson with renowned trainer Chris McGrann, at whose yard Jeanette was based. The lesson didn't go to plan – Jack reared up and cracked Fiona's cheekbone before going over backwards – but it resulted in one of the great eventing partnerships of all time when Chris took a lease on the horse and Jeanette became his rider. The pair started competing when Jack was five, and a year later, Richard Holdsworth – whose partner Lindsey Marsh had liveries with Chris – bought him for Jeanette to ride.

**"He was always like a teapot, but he was easy to steer"**

ON OVER TO YOU'S HIGH HEAD CARRIAGE

"When he was a young horse he didn't give you a brilliant feel – it was a case of 'I wish you'd put a bit of effort in,'" remembers Jeanette. "He was like that all the way until he reached advanced. He wasn't a flamboyant jumper, he didn't have a big bascule, but he always had a good enough technique. "Jack's characteristic high head carriage was already in evidence. Jeanette says: "He was always like a teapot! It didn't concern me. I was as naive as he was."

Dressage wasn't Jack's strongest phase, but with the help of trainer John Bowen and the horses' strong work ethic, he performed creditably in this phase on his championship appearances.

**"He gave us a good vibe"**

"OVER TO YOU was unbelievable – you could not want a better number one," recalls team-mate Pippa Funnell (pictured below right, with Jeanette). "He and Jeanette were the most incredible pathfinders and we were so lucky to have them during that special time in the sport and to have that run of form with the British team. "We realised during those years how valuable it is to get that first score on the board – it puts a good vibe in the team and keeps the positive energy when you get off to a good start. I was quite nervous at the Europeans last year when I was pathfinder because I realise what an important role it is from the Over To You years. "Jack wasn't the easiest on the flat, but they always posted a respectable score, perhaps five marks off the leader, and he was the most brilliant cross-country horse. He was fast and brave, excelling at galloping and

It was always difficult to get him to the end of the contact because he was light in the mouth and didn't grab the bit at all. But he was easy to steer and always looking for the fences. "His walk and canter were very good, but he was a little like a sewing machine in trot. It improved as he became stronger over time. "He did Bramham as an eight-year-old and I felt then that he could definitely go all the way because he sprang round there. "AFTER finishing 16th at their first Badminton, Jeanette and Jack were chosen for their first championship, the 1998 WEG at Pratoni, where they gained

useful experience as individuals, finishing 25th with one refusal across country. In 1999, the pair returned to Badminton, for a very wet cross-country day. Watching the early riders on the monitors, Jeanette's trainer John Bowen realised the lines the pair had walked were no longer rideable. When she came into the 10-minute box, he sat her down and drew on the fence drawings in the



Above: the pair claimed their one individual medal with silver at WEG 2002 in Jerez de la Frontera. Left: two years before that, with Pippa Funnell as the Brits take silver at the Sydney Olympics

programme to show her where she should go. "It rained a hell of a lot and I hadn't walked the fences well enough on the long routes," admits Jeanette. "I learnt that year to walk every single route just in case. "Ninth place – the first of five top-10 placings the pair would go on to rack up at Badminton – earned them selection for the European Championships in Luhmühlen.



"He had some amazing rounds at Badminton... if you had some galloping stretches, you knew you could make time easy" – nippy and light on his feet, Over To You excelled at the top event

"We were under pressure to get a team qualification for the Olympics," remembers Jeanette. "I'd had a good run at Burghley on Melford Bell the week before and Chris Bartle, the chef d'équipe, decided to put me first. I'm pleased he did. "The last person I saw at the start of phase A was [chair of selectors] Mandy Stibbe and she gave me a lot of confidence, saying, 'I know

you can do it,' with a lovely big smile. "The British team took gold – the first of four European team golds in a row for Jack – and the pair's place as pathfinder became part of the blueprint for success. The chef d'équipe was asked to take a later slot was the 2003 Punchestown Europeans, when they fell at the water near the end of the course, the only blip on their team record.

**"He's grumpy but lovable"**

"I'VE had horses with Jeanette since 2000 and I always followed Over To You," says part-owner Mark Johnson. "He's not your everyday event horse – I just loved him. "After the Europeans in 2005, the owners gifted Jack to Jeanette. She couldn't afford to run him, so asked if I'd come on board. But he didn't need any running – he won over £30,000 that year, he kept my other two horses with Jeanette over the winter. "As a character, Jack's grumpy but lovable. You go in the stable and he has his ears back, but get a Polo out and he's your best friend. He was a tricky, stressy horse who didn't eat well at events – he knew what it was all about. "Over the years we developed such a big team. Catherine [Cawdon, who groomed for Jack at many of his big events] would come back on board and John [Bowen] was there – all credit to him for his perseverance with his dressage. "We had such good fun. It was serious but we just enjoyed every aspect of it. There's more to it than what the horse is achieving, it's team work. "The cross-country was very demanding and although the grass looked green from being

With his head held high, Over To You's distinctive jumping style – here demonstrated at Jerez WEG – was familiar to all eventing fans



"I didn't like being asked to go later – it put me on edge from the second I was told," says Jeanette. In another departure from routine that went wrong, the only time Jack fell at Badminton, in 2002, was the year Jeanette forgot to ask for their normal place in the Portcullis stabling area, so they were in the Clock Tower yard instead. Jack's championship record includes two team silvers at Olympics. "The flight was the main worry before Sydney – we thought the horses might get infections or travel sickness, flying for that long and having their heads up," recalls Jeanette. "The weather wasn't as hot and humid as we were predicting. Jack made the cross-country feel easy. There was a long pull at the

**"I thought, 'Please don't overjump that or I'll end up round your ears'"**

JEANETTE ON THE BOGEY FENCE AT WEG 2002 – AT WHICH THEY TOOK INDIVIDUAL SILVER

end which we thought might be quite tiring, but he stormed round well inside the time. "He kept his summer coat up to the last day of the competition and then it suddenly stood on end as if to say, 'It's winter now.' On that last day, he looked like a woolly monster. "Jack's day of days came at the 2002 WEG in Spain, when tough jumping phases played to his strengths. "His dressage didn't feel an amazing test, but he got his best score," recalls Jeanette. "The cross-country was very demanding and although the grass looked green from being

watered, it was really firm underfoot. "Among the boggy fences was a little log on the top of a steep slope into the water. "We'd never seen anything like that," says Jeanette. "I thought, 'Please don't overjump that or I'll end up round your ears.' I had my hands on my neck just in front of the withers to push myself back and I just aimed and kept kicking. I was relieved to get it over and done with, but I never thought there would be so much carnage behind me. "The pair went into the showjumping in sixth and had one fence down. "I remember standing at the entrance with Kenneth Clawson and every time a horse came out he'd say I'd moved up a position. When it got to, 'You've got a bronze,' he was in tears, then it was silver.



He may not have had a flamboyant jumping style as a youngster, but Over To You was supremely efficient as team pathfinder. "Jack put me on the map, for which I'm so grateful. I've ridden a lot of other horses at five-star, but none were as consistent and successful. I wish I had three or four more horses like Jack." H&H

What's your favourite Over To You memory? Write to H&H at [hletters@futurenet.com](mailto:hletters@futurenet.com)



"Jack put me on the map, for which I'm so grateful" – now aged 32, Jeanette's legendary ride is enjoying retirement at her yard



"We had a really good partnership – I trusted him, he trusted me." Together, Jeanette and Over To You etched their place in the annals of eventing

IN NUMBERS	
8	championship appearances
2	OLYMPIC TEAM SILVERS
4	European team golds
1	world team bronze
16	seasons eventing
1	INDIVIDUAL MEDAL – WORLD SILVER
7	top-16 finishes at Badminton
2,170	British Eventing points