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CANTERING AHEAD

Catherine Austen interviews **Rosalind Canter** about her Eventing career to date and how she found the confidence to pursue it

“Whatever I do, I want to do well. I don’t want to play at it – that’s not who I am,” says Rosalind Canter firmly. The 28 year old from Louth, Lincolnshire, is doing very well indeed. She has established a reputation as an excellent producer of young horses – backed up by the fact that she took three of the top 10 places in the five year old class at the British Eventing Young Horse Championships at Osberton in October last year. But she’s also making a name for herself as a serious contender at the higher levels. She rode on three Nations Cup teams for Britain in 2014, finishing fifth individually twice – at Ballindenisk and Strzegom – and ninth at Houghton.

“Everyone involved with the Nations Cup squad was so nice and so supportive. It pushes your boundaries and makes you want more; it makes you ambitious to be better,” she says.

“But it’s taken me a while to get there. I only did my first three star in 2013 and I saw a lot of my friends get to that level on their Junior horses, which didn’t happen for me,” says Ros. “But in hindsight that was the best thing that could have happened. I spent so long working with and riding youngsters that everything was in place and the step-up was easy – and successful – as a result. I want the same at four star.”

It was the four years (from 2008 to the end of 2011) that Ros spent riding for Judy Bradwell that cemented the foundations of her career.

“I grew up on a farm, hunting and Pony Clubbing with my two elder sisters. I did Juniors and Young Riders in a minor way without knowing what it took to get to the higher levels – we were fairly uneducated at that point and just did it without understanding how much training everyone else was doing,” she says.

Her first horse, Silver Curtis, a full brother to 2010 Mitsubishi

Motors Badminton winner Flint Curtis, accelerated her career, taking her to success at Intermediate level and to her first Advanced – and jammed the brakes on it.

“At the JRN Championships in 2003, the Junior Selectors said they’d be half interested in me if I could sort the dressage out – at that stage I was jumping double clears without much of a dressage mark,” she says. “So we went dressaging every weekend all winter, which was the complete undoing of me. For the first time I had control of the horse, which completely confused the jumping phases because I went the other way and started hooking and holding. I lacked the basics in the first place and the horse was never really consistent again.”

Ros did a sports science degree at Sheffield Hallam University, continuing to ride, but without any thought of making Eventing her career.

“Eventing as a profession was never on my radar,” she says honestly. “I’d always earned money out of horses – as a 10 year old I had ponies in for schooling and I’d been teaching since I was 12, but I didn’t think of being a full-time competition rider. I didn’t really believe I could go further than Intermediate.”

In her last year at university, she rode a quirky horse, who, like Silver Curtis, would go well one day and badly the next.

“I believed that was because of me,” she says.

So Ros went travelling for the winter with a friend.

“That was one of the best things I ever did in terms of confidence,” she says.

She came back and spent the summer of 2008 riding at home and teaching, with ideas of getting a job and perhaps moving to London that winter.

But she had some lessons from Judy Bradwell and asked her if she knew of anyone who wanted someone to do a bit of work for them.

“Judy was short of someone in the yard and asked me to come and ride a few of hers,” says Ros.

And four years of riding and producing young horses under Judy’s expert eye began.

“She taught me a great deal. The really great thing about working

Rosalind’s early career gathered pace when she started riding smart young horses like Ziloma (pictured) for Judy Bradwell



ROSALIND CANTER TOPPED THE BRITISH EVENTING FOUNDATION POINTS TABLE IN 2014. She finished more than 200 points clear of her nearest rival. For more information on Foundation Points and how to earn them, visit www.britisheventing.com



Rosalind riding Michele Shalt's No Excuse into third place in the five year old class at the KBIS British Eventing Young Horse Championships, October 2014

with her, especially to start with, was that it was all young horses, so the pressure came off. Young horses do make mistakes sometimes, so I stopped blaming myself. A few good results and you start believing in yourself.

“Also, when you are working for someone else, the emotional attachment has to go out of it. I had a job to do – it wasn’t just about my disappointment anymore.”

Her riding on smart youngsters like Wutella and Vermeer – on whom she respectively won the CCII* and finished sixth in the CCII2* at Osberton in 2010 – began to catch the eye. In 2011, she finished second on Aprobanta at the Six Year Old World Championships at Le Lion d’Angers.

But she also had horses at home, an hour away from Judy’s yard. “In the last year I was riding at home by 6am, going to Judy’s,

“I was riding at home by 6am ... and I’d still be on a horse at 10pm”

riding there, then racing back home and I’d still be on a horse at 10pm,” she says. “It couldn’t carry on.”

So she set up on her own at the beginning of 2012. Finishing second in the CCII2* at Houghton on Emill early that season was a confidence boost. And her own Zenshera, who had won the CCII* at Weston Park in 2011, was climbing the grades.

“He’s my pride and joy,” she says.

She found him in Holland at Jan Greve’s yard. “Olivia Craddock and I went there for 10 days and he was the first horse I rode there because he was one they thought was particularly talented.”

Zenshera had actually spent the past few months as a carriage horse because Jan hadn’t thought he had the talent to be a jumper. But he came home with Ros, who thought she’d do some BE100s with him and sell him.

“He never went anywhere,” she says. “He’s fantastic. Not the most naturally talented, but his temperament and willingness to work is brilliant.”

In 2013 they jumped double clear at their first CIC3* at Barbury and were 24th at their first CCII3*, Boekelo. They joined the Nations Cup squad with great success in 2014, but sadly the 10 year old picked up an injury in training and will be on the sidelines for this season.

“The massive disappointment is that I thought we had a chance of being an individual at the Blair Europeans this year,” she says.

Allstar B, owned by Ros’ trainer Caroline Moore, has taken up the reins at Advanced level, however, and was fifth at Chatsworth and seventh at Bramham last year.

“I’m excited about him – he’s a very good jumping horse and is another with a great temperament,” she says.

And she has a wealth of lovely youngsters, including the now six year olds No Excuse, Shannondale Sue, Pencos Crown Jewel and Spring Ambition, and the mares Cekatinka (winner of the CCII* at Houghton) and Calista, sixth at Osberton in the CCII2*, as ammunition.

Ros, for all her early confidence issues, is without doubt a winner. Her British Eventing record tells you that. She wants to do a four star before she is 30 and has no intention of “doing it for the experience”. Given luck and capable horses, she should be a major player before too long. ★