



Rosalind and her top horse, Allstar B: a partnership that could now be in the running for a Europeans spot

# Rosalind Canter

The fifth-placed Badminton rider tells *Lucy Higginson* why her family farm is the perfect training ground — and how Christopher Bartle worked his magic

**T**HE diminutive Rosalind Canter (Ros to her friends) is the farmer's daughter who landed a big result at Badminton, finishing fifth and best of the British with Allstar B. With her best previous four-star result 25th at Burghley last year, did anyone see it coming? "I very much saw it coming," says Great Britain's eventing performance coach Christopher Bartle.

## HORSE&HOUND THE INTERVIEW

It was him to whom Ros turned last autumn when — with just two four-stars under her belt — she felt frustrated at being "a

long way off being one of the big boys though I was on a horse that could do all three phases". Christopher worked his fabled magic, scrutinising videos and tweaking her position on his giant training seesaw, known as "Rock-on Ruby". "We found that my reins had got shorter as Allstar B got keener, and begun pulling my body forward," explains Ros. "I wasn't always ready for the next element."

**A**T eight stone and not quite 5ft 2in, she looks tiny aboard 17.1hh Albie, but beyond "liking my horses quite polite", she doesn't bat an eyelid about this. Her size has clearly never held her back — she was a talented cross-country runner as a child, a first-team hockey player at college, and still plays hockey and netball.

Rosalind first established her (let's face it, wonderfully fitting) name winning young horse classes when — having "done juniors fairly badly and young riders really badly" — and completed a sports science degree, she joined Burghley winner turned trainer and young horse producer Judy Bradwell for a summer and stayed four years.

"I felt for a long time I was getting left behind [doing that]," says Ros. "In hindsight it was the best thing that ever happened. I would not have been ready to set up a yard myself without that education."

Establishing a reputation for producing young horses did her no harm either; a clutch of owners sent their three- or four-year-olds to her when she went solo, and they're still with her five years later, doing well.

Other trainers have played a part too. Ros trains with Ian Woodhead now on the flat but pays particular credit to Team GB junior coach and former four-star rider Caroline Moore, who owns Allstar B (Albie) with her.

"She's my owner, trainer, mentor and friend," says Ros. "She bought Albie to ride herself and didn't have to keep him when her own career became so busy. She's a very driven but giving person."

**I**T'S easy to see why Rosalind headed back to the family farm (her mother is the farmer, her dad is an estate agent and surveyor) in the Lincolnshire Wolds to set up her yard in 2011. The facilities are formidable. A 20x40m arena was supplemented by a 40x60m one with the help of an EU grant as the on-site livery side-business grew, and Ros one day had a "lightbulb moment" to link them, with a few extras thrown in. She therefore has ditches and a water fence to play over from a surface — plus a gorgeous cross-country area in a lush grass valley.

"I used to travel over an hour to some gallops before Burghley — then I realised that our own hills, grass and valleys are all I need. It's variety that's key," she says.

Does she jump her horses more, having such resources, Michael-Jung style?

"Definitely," she confirms. "Particularly the younger ones. I've one who is exceptionally talented but needs his mind occupying — we can walk through the water every day."

Ros likes to ride her 15-strong string almost entirely herself.

"They have lots of variety and will live out as much as possible — it makes them very laid-back. There's no horse walker here."

As wonderful as the set-up here is, another clearly important factor is being surrounded by her family. Rosalind's two older sisters still live locally and she glows about the fact that her small nephews now blast round the farm in their plastic tractors — "it's so fantastic here for children."

Ros lives off-site nearby with her non-horsey but sporty partner, Chris.

"He's a scuba diving instructor and would happily get up at 3am to go off diving — so my eventing habits are not alien to him," says Ros. The relationship has improved her focus and life balance.

"I now go to work and have a reason to stop,

'A horse that can do all three phases': Allstar B pops neatly over a skinny en route to fifth place at Badminton



*'She is a cool customer, and transfers 100% of the things we discuss in training to her performance'*

CHRISTOPHER BARTLE

whereas before there was a shady line between the beginning and end of my day," she explains.

**S**TRONG in all three phases — she won an intermediate at Aston last week on a dressage score of just 19.8 — she has the advantage of having studied things like visualisation for her degree.

"In a lot of ways I have the World Class education already," she says, "but only joining the programme made me realise I should be applying it to myself — that I am now an athlete."

On the back of her strong one-day results, she is grateful to World Class for the experience of being on five Nations Cup teams, "learning to ride with exposure and pressure without quite being on the stage of a Badminton".

"She is a cool customer," affirms Christopher Bartle, "and transfers 100% of the things we discuss in training to her performance. She's that old cliché, a joy to work with."

Furthermore Ros was one of two up-and-coming British eventers sent on the Ambition programme to observe in Rio last summer.

"You get wrapped up in the eventing world, and the Olympics isn't like that," she explains. "It opened my eyes to the scale of things and was great preparation if I do go to an Olympics one day."

Rosalind's immediate focus now is Luhmühlen with her other top horse,

Zenshera, who's built up to this level after missing 2015 through injury. After that, her selection chances for August's Europeans in Strzegom may be bolstered by Albie's performance there in the three-star last June — third, and again the best Brits.

Baby-faced she may be, but at 31, Rosalind has the temperament, support team, talent and quite possibly the horse power to canter on to the British team. **H&H**



Rosalind and her dog, Lettuce, with the trophies the rider won at Badminton

Pictures by Trevor-morris photography.co.uk and focusonhorses.com