

LISA COUPE

TALKS TO SHOW CIRCUIT....

WORDS: **DIANE TRILLO**

Firstly thanks Lisa for taking the time to talk to Show Circuit.

Show Circuit: When did you start riding, and can you remember your first pony?

Lisa Coupe: I probably sat on a pony from age 4 or 5 but would've really started riding at 6 on a wee white fella named 'PLANET'. PLANET came from the Rattray's at Cheleken Stud, and taught a lot of people to ride including former dressage rider Anna Bramley, and show jumper **LUCY OLPHERT!** Another of my early ponies **MYSTIC MINT** on whom I really began competing and did PC Dressage, Training level Eventing and had my first Showjumping successes on – went on to teach many the ropes including the Boardman family, and current pony grand prix riders Alexa Randall and Lilly Toothill. They were super ponies.

SC: Do you have any mentors or other help (either with your horses or instruction)?

LC: I don't have mentors as such but like to talk to as many people as I can about how and why they have done what they have done, getting inspiration from their stories and journeys. It's surprising what you can take away from some conversations you didn't expect. Keep an open mind and most importantly open ears. Anyone who has managed to succeed in their chosen field is an inspiration to me- and if they have achieved balance in their life then even more so! I have been fortunate to train with a number of fantastic coaches over the years. Des Lowe started me off jumping – giving me a solid base which many young riders seem to be missing out on these days. The basics were drummed into me and I still ride the same exercises daily. I have trained with Canadian Jen Hamilton (when she comes to NZ) for over 10 years now and she is fantastic. Greg Best is a brilliant trainer. A real asset to NZ – I would love to train with him more. I spent some time in Germany with Samantha McIntosh in 2004. Sam is undoubtedly one of the most stylish riders in the world so working with her was pretty awesome. My second stint in Germany in 2007 for a couple of months I rode for Pia-Luise Aufrect (one time German SJ team member) – and ended up getting the chance to train with German Team Trainer Kurt Gravemeier – One day we took some horses to a big indoor arena to train and it's just Kurt and I in the truck and I think to myself 'wow, if only everyone back home could see this. I'm sitting here chatting with Kurt Gravemeier - trainer to some of the best in the world – he's driving the truck and training me on some young horses worth hundreds of thousands of euros. How did I manage this?!' Looking back that was pretty incredible. These days I don't have a jump trainer as such but work on the flat a lot with Coralie Williams and have lessons with Australian dressage star Brett Parberry when he comes to NZ. Flatwork has become a focus in producing my young horses. I have support from my fantastic sponsors Bates, Stirrups Equestrian and Vetpro from which I am extremely grateful. And of course huge help



from my family and Lynsey with whom I work.

SC: What have been the highlights of your show jumping career so far?

LC: Any time I have worn the Fern or won a National Title has been a highlight! I was lucky enough to be in the NZ Young Rider team from 2001-2006 and had some great trips to Australia. (A fantastic opportunity for Young Riders and I hope that they keep it going.) Travelling to South Africa with the Tri-nations team in 2006 and 2007 and winning was rather memorable. I've placed 4th and 3rd in the HOY class in 2005 and 2006 with **FOREST II** and **DAMARUSA**, but my biggest single win would have been the Grand Prix at the HOY show in 2006 with **FOREST II**. I won the Toyota Young Rider Series that day also so that was a good day!

SC: What is the best tip you can offer our riders when competing?

LC: Don't be rattled by the competition, make a plan and stick to your guns. You know what you and your horse are capable of – all you can do is your best. If you win you win, if you don't you don't. And to remember to make the most of the good times – horses are great levellers. One minute on top, the next you are on the ground. Literally! Commitment is key. Work hard and hope it pays off (or that you get lucky!) Stay diligent in your training. Things don't happen overnight. Make a plan and stick to it. Horses learn through repetition so be consistent, and most importantly don't skip the basics.

SC: What is the funniest thing that has happened to you riding?

LC: At the time falling off is never funny, but in hindsight some of my falls may have caused a giggle or two....

SC: For you, what are the best and worst things about show jumping?



PHOTO: BARBARA THOMSON

LC: Nothing feels better than winning. Nothing feels worse than losing! It's an amazing feeling when you have worked really hard to produce a horse and things are going great and all the hard work pays off. And although financially draining, the lifestyle that goes with show jumping is pretty incredible. You meet some amazing people and see some wonderful places and can have a pretty good time as well. One of the worst things is just how quickly things can go bad. I have had a bit of an average run in last couple of years - but that's just horses for you! Losing a good horse for whatever reason is always devastating. Injuries are always pretty frustrating too. I missed November and December last season with broken fingers of each hand, and November and December again this season with a broken foot and ligament damage. Eight weeks in a moon boot is not much fun.

SC: Tell us about the horses you currently have in your stable?

LC: BATES LIMERICK GNZ – 17HH 6yr Chestnut Stallion by **LITTORIO** out of **LS JAYNE** (imp. By **JADALCO**). Bred and part owned by Paul Ffoulkes of Goldengrove Stud. **'PENUT'** is the stable favourite – and hopefully he's my next star. This horse has a phenomenal brain and temperament – he is just so trainable. If for some reason he doesn't make it as a jumper I would turn to a career in dressage with him. His brain together with his power and the scope makes him a serious horse for the future. **BATES AMARETTO MVNZ** – 16.2hh 6yr by Pico Bello. 'Beetle' is a totally different horse to the stallion. Very quirky, but just as special. Scopey, spunky and careful– Hopefully a work cup horse in the making. **BATES KAHURANGI VIN ROUGE** – 16.1hh Mare by **VALIANT** owned by Gael Schultz. Vinnie has started jumping the Grand Prix's and has won in placed in many 1.30m classes this season. She has a huge heart, and hopefully will jump around some bigger

Grand Prix's. I have a couple of NZPH 4yrs also which will be ready to come out next season. I look forward to working with NZPH – they have bred and produced some fantastic horses the past few years. -Plus the ones we have bred from **GEMIMA PUDDLE DUCK** (By **ABERLOU**) and **DAMARUSA** (By **DISTLEFINK**). We have youngsters by **CASSINI II**, **CORRADO**, **CLEARWAY**, **PRESTIGE VDL** and **LITTORIO**.

SC: Which have been your favourite horses of all time and why?

LC: GEMIMA PUDDLE DUCK – My first real Grand Prix Horse. She was a freak but she was phenomenal I would do almost anything to have another one like her! We came close to winning the NZ league of the World Cup series when I was 18 - We were leading the series heading into the final round at Ti Papa where disaster struck and my hackamore broke. Not ideal. I also rode in a NZ team for a Trans-Tasman test and jumped in all the big classes for the first time with her. She was one in a million. **FINAL ICE**, **BUSH MAGIC** and **DAMARUSA** were special too – all three I produced from 4yrs to winning Young Rider and Grand Prix classes. **KIWI CASH** holds a very special place in my heart. Possibly the biggest freak of them all. I became quite skilled in the art of stick-ability with Cash. 'You miss, you die' would be his motto. But he was the most careful horse I have sat on. You had zero margins for error with accuracy but he would rarely touch a fence. He won several Grand Prix, jumped in some World Cup rounds and finished 3rd in the 1.40m-1.60m National Championship. I learnt a lot with **FOREST II**. I was lucky enough to get the ride on **FOREST II** from Natasha Slavich after a 2 year hiatus munching grass. We worked our way right up to jumping the big classes with some good results. I campaigned him in Australia for a couple of months in 2006 jumping at Elysian Fields, the Brisbane Royal and then down in Adelaide. He was a great horse and



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subsequently went on to do many great things.

SC: What does the Bates sponsorship mean to you?

LC: Having Bates on board has been amazing. Firstly knowing that they believe in you so much to want to support you is huge! I had been in need of a new saddle for a while and having a constant stream of horses in and out of the yard – all of different shapes and sizes meant saddle fitting was always an issue. I tried a lot of different saddles and came across the Bates Elevation. Initially sceptical as hadn't ridden in Bates for years, I was absolutely rapt to discover I had finally found a saddle that did what I needed it to do – fit the horses, be fantastic to ride in, and look great! When Bates found out I was keen on the saddle they wanted to become involved. Having their support and being able to ride in their saddles is amazing. I am very proud to be a Bates advocate. I ride in the 'Bates Elevation', and the 'Bates Elevation + Deep Seat'. I also ride in the Bates Innova and Wintec Isabell dressage saddles.

SC: What achievements and goals are left you would like to achieve?

LC: To ride for NZ at top international level - WEG and Olympics one day. It will be a little further down the track though, at the moment I am in a serious rebuilding phase – focusing on producing young horses, and waiting hopefully for the next big opportunity to come along. It's always harder going through a patch when you are minus a Grand Prix horse. But you never know what is around the corner. I have a team of youngsters at the moment with some very nice ones coming through, plus we have bred a few from my good jumping mares 'Gemima Puddle Duck' and 'Damarusa' and I am hoping that one of these will be 'the one'. I also would love to train a horse to Grand Prix in dressage. Probably a strange thing to hear a show jumper say! But dressage fascinates me – the training and the technicality of it. I live in an area surrounded by dressage queens and have had to chance to watch a lot of training and sit on some pretty awesome horses – being able to get a horse to really sit and piaffe and passage and to ride tempi changes is pretty cool!

SC: Do you have a life besides the horses?

LC: I completed a Bachelor of Business Studies (majoring in Marketing Communications) in 2008. Juggling University and competing seriously was at times quite a strain, but I was extremely lucky to have incredible support from my family - financially and other. I was very fortunate to be a Prime Ministers Scholarship recipient which basically put me through Uni. I have been doing horses fulltime for the past year; I set up Coupe Equestrian Ltd and have been riding, schooling horses, teaching and competing. I have returned to study this year to complete a Post Graduate Diploma in Sport Management, so we will see how that goes!

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