



Groundwork for success

When dressage stars Carl Hester and Charlotte Dujardin from Newent struck Olympic gold in London last summer it was an especially proud moment for Ross and Candice Hemming.

The husband and wife team run Leisure Ride Group which provided the equine surfaces for the riders' outdoor and indoor arenas at Hester's Oaklebrook Mill stable, writes Bev Hawes.

"We put his dressage surface down in summer 2011 and they were on it for a 15 months before they went to the Olympics. Carl was over the moon about it," said Ross.

Mr Hemming is managing director of Leisure Ride Group based at Fiddington, near Tewkesbury.

Under the Trojan brand the company provides synthetic surfaces and fibres for equestrian centres, arenas, gallops and race tracks worldwide.

It supplies wax coated surfaces with a specific mix to suit jumping (cushioned), dressage (firm) National Hunt Gallop (good to soft) and Flat Race Gallop (good to firm).

Ross started the business 10 years ago, having come from a background of civil and agricultural construction. His father ran a plant hire business involved in some major construction projects including the Brockworth and Newbury bypasses and pipeline laying.

His mother Glenys Hemming runs Abbey Dressage Equestrian Centre at Fiddington and was formerly district commissioner of the Stroud District Pony Club. Ross saw the opportunities for a specialist equestrian business.

"It took me about three years to source all the products for the surfaces and decide what we wanted to use," said Ross. "We want to set ourselves apart from the other manufacturers in the quality of the products we use to make the surfaces.

"The other manufacturers did not specifically produce a surface for each of the riding disciplines. Dressage, show jumping, flat racing and National Hunt racing.

"The dressage rider wants a surface that is very firm and they want to be riding on top of the surface. Show jumpers

require a surface that is cushioned.

"National Hunt racers want a softer surface that is heavy going. They are not training a three mile race horse how to run fast, they want the horse to stay."

Leisure Ride Group has produced its own maintenance products that can be used all over the world and are engineered with waxed coatings to produce a longer life.

And quality is important when you realise a race course surface can cost upwards of £2 million.

"When I'm watching a horse go round an arena I'm not watching how good it looks, I'm looking at the surface to see what the kick back is and how deep the horse is going, the energy and does the surface repair itself."

He believes the overseas market is vast.

"We are going to Dubai at the beginning of June for a meeting with a possible partner for a licensing agreement.

"We will provide pre-mixed surfaces for them which will all be under the Leisure Ride Group banner. We can educate them on the fibre additives and how to regenerate surfaces with those and the wax coatings.

"We have already got a partner in Finland and Ireland and also looking at Australia and possibly the American market which is huge. I think the key to the worldwide market, particularly in racing, is the wax coatings we produce where we can rejuvenate and improve surfaces.

"We are into making surfaces last longer and engineering maintenance products giving customers more value."

The business is also planning to launch a leisure wear clothing range led by Candice.

"We have had pretty well had a 100 per cent success rate with everything we have done. We are solid and sure of our own products to perform as they should do."

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