

Willa at home with the 'straightforward' Lauries Laudatio 2, British seven-year-old champion

# Willa Newton

The 26-year-old eventer tells Catherine Austen about learning from the Germans and the importance of business sense

**W**ILLA NEWTON has catapulted herself into the limelight after winning the two most prestigious classes for young event horses in Britain this autumn. Three weeks after taking the eight- and nine-year-old CIC3\* at Blenheim on Caja 20, she rode Lauries Laudatio 2 to win the KBIS seven-year-old championship at Osberton — the class she won on Caja 20 a year earlier.

"I thought Blenheim was too good to be true, but to follow it up at Osberton was just crazy," says the 26-year-old.

Willa was on gold medal-winning

teams at both junior and young rider level, and took individual silver as well in her last year in young riders in 2011. By that time she had good experience at CCI3\* level, having jumped clear at Bramham, Blenheim and Boekelo. However, stepping up further — to winning at senior level, and to CCI4\* — is not straightforward.

"It can be hard when you've had a good time in young riders," she says. "I had a lot to learn at the higher level cross-country and it takes time."

Given Willa's background — her father Joey was a leading amateur jockey with two Aintree Fox Hunters' wins to his

credit and is a racecourse steward and chairman of Racing Welfare, as well as a former master of the Belvoir, while her mother Emma evented to intermediate level, and her sister Chloe rode up to CCI4\* level — you might have assumed she had the cross-country cracked.

"Being tall [5ft 11in], I had to work on my balance a lot," she says.

It is a measure of her as a person and competitor that she has sought out her weaknesses and worked hard on them.

## Learning from the best

IT would have been easy to stay in her parents' lovely yard in Stonesby, near