

Jo sets sights on competing in Olympics

By Oliver Hulme

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Jo May took another step towards achieving her dream of competing at the 2008 Olympics when she received the prize for the highest-placed British rider competing at the Burghley Horse Trials for the first time.

Jo May, of Stoughton, and her horse, Faere Vision, also known as Spex, finished in 25th place and received a miniature version of the Land Rover perpetual challenge trophy.

Jo admitted to pre-cross country nerves at Burghley: "I was seriously nervous. I hadn't felt so scared in my life and I did set out rather slowly in order to get round.

"He jumped well - apart from an unplanned alternative at The Leaf Pit, when he dramatically veered to the right after the drop - and he completely coped with it which has now given me so much confidence for the future."

Burghley was the second four-star completion for the combination who have been together for 10 years, when Jo bought him from his breeder as a three-year-old.

Jo is looking forward to next spring's Badminton but is now concentrating her efforts on her own livery and teaching yard in Stoughton, near Wedmore.

Jo bought Spex as a virtually unbroken three-year-old and



Olympic hopeful Jo May with Spex

Photo by Tessa Podpadec

has trained him herself, forging a strong relationship with the horse. He is solid in dressage, but he is a phenomenal jumper and loves cross country.

Wells-born Jo started riding at five but it was not until she was 10, when she went to see her first show-jumping event near Frome, that she was really taken with equestrianism.

"I just knew that this was what I wanted to do and to be honest I haven't looked back since that moment," she said.

Jo runs a busy livery operation at her yard in Stoughton and is a highly respected teacher.

The Stoughton yard is very much a family concern, sister,

Alison accompanies Jo to all the events, as lead groom. Another sister, Belinda Bennett, and Jo sort things out at home and dad is always on hand with support and encouragement.

At the moment they are on the long list for the 2008 Olympics.

Although the main games will be in Beijing, the equestrian events will be held in Hong Kong. The horses travel by cargo plane, which will be a nervous time for any British competitor.

Jo said: "I'm a one-horse woman, I don't have a string of horses I can call on if Spex is not able to compete.

"So I have to be philosophical about whatever happens and just hope for the best."