

## Wonderful Walter



AS a spectator, there are the winners we cannot help but praise and admire, and there are those horses we just love to watch and who we all talk about, who capture our imaginations and endear us. Occasionally, those two major attributes collide, and with a little longevity we get a Valegro, or a Milton, or a King William.

This week, we focus on a contender for that future accolade, longevity permitting. At just 10 years old, Michele Saul's Lordships Graffalo wowed everyone at this year's Badminton with his remarkably mature, textbook performance with cross-country supreme Ros Canter.

As this week's front cover testifies, he is quite the picture, too. And now we find, having spoken at greater length to both Ros and yard second rider Georgie Frow (feature, p24) that he has bags of character to boot. Yes, this joker will rugby tackle you when you endeavour to tack him up, will see if he can fling drool at you from the cross-ties, seemingly for japes, and has even been known to clean a car with his tongue, such is his penchant for licking things. He likes a cuddle when he's lying down in his stable and is entirely unfazed by 20-tonne lorries coming by, but he's not mad keen on flowers, particularly purple ones. And he's called Walter. What a dude.

Knowing these intriguing little idiosyncrasies of his personality, we can enjoy following this exceptional performer's progress that little bit more. We're always grateful to riders for sharing these insights, rather than claiming no quirks. Perfection can be dull – Walter is wonderful.

Sarah Jenkins  
Editor-in-Chief

HORSE & HOUND  
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# Lordships Graffalo

The Badminton runner-up lacks manners on the ground, but he's from a family who all perform at their best at events, as *Pippa Roome* finds out

## RIDER ROS CANTER

"LORDSHIPS GRAFFALO [Walter] is out of the same mare, Cornish Queen, as another of my rides, Pencos Crown Jewel. Breeder Pennie Wallace sold her as a foal to Kate James and Annie Makin, who went to the Burghley young event horse final to pick a rider for her and chose me. Because I had her, Pennie decided to send me Lordships Graffalo – who was bred while Cornish Queen was on loan to Lordships Stud – to be broken in.

"I loved him from the day I got him and he was always for sale, so I approached Michele Saul, who was looking for a young horse, and asked her if she'd consider buying him.

"He's kind of untrainable on the ground. He'll rugby tackle you when you try to put the bridle on and he's not very good at social distancing. But he was easy to break in and never bothered about the rider. He was quite lazy to start with – he'd get completely left

behind ambling along out hacking – but out of the blue he could buck or rear or do something funny.

"Walter really surprised us with his results last year, but that whole family are performers – I've ridden Lordships Pare Royale out of the same dam, too – and they show their best work at a competition.

"I thought Walter was ready for Badminton, but I don't have loads of experience, plus because of Covid he hasn't had mileage at events such as Bramham, which you'd normally do before Badminton. But he'd made the four-stars he had done feel easy, so I had no reason not to take him.

"On Tuesday at Badminton his eyes were everywhere, but the longer we were there, the more he enjoyed it. He was unfazed by the prize-giving and stood there with his ears pricked, never having a moment of worry."

## Yard second rider Georgie Frow

"WALTER is always causing entertainment – it's funny to watch if you're not trying to tack him up! He eats the tack, throws headcollars across the yard, tries to grab hold of brushes. If you leave him too long in the cross-ties, he'll dribble and throw it to see how far he can get his spit across the yard. The vet once parked outside his stable to see another horse and he licked her car clean. He's the joker and always has the last laugh.

"He's cuddly in the stable, especially when he's lying down. In the winter, when the horses are in more, he has an afternoon nap around 3pm each day.

"He's a beautiful horse to ride with a lovely mouth. When you take him hacking he wouldn't be bothered by a 20-tonne lorry, but he doesn't like flowers, especially purple ones. One day last winter, he went round a corner and just bronced. Then he stood there and looked at me as if to say, 'Why are you on the floor?'"

## BADMINTON JUDGE CHRISTIAN LANDOLT

"LORDSHIPS GRAFFALO has the most amazing attitude and good balance, which showed in all phases at Badminton.

"In the dressage, he worked in a nice frame, to a nice contact. There were occasionally blips in his work, because he's young and green, but you don't sanction those minor things harshly because you know the horse is working in the right direction.

"He doesn't immediately strike you as a superstar, but the more you look at him, the more you like him. He makes you feel good as

a judge – the sort of horse where the way he works puts a smile on your face and puts you at ease. With some horses, you get a knot in your stomach wondering what's going to happen next, but not him.

"Lordships Graffalo looks happy, willing and genuine, which showed the whole week long. Everything we saw in the dressage carried through to the jumping phases. He didn't seem fazed by any of the tests but flew through the whole week with a smile on his face, trying his best, which was charming to see." **H&H**



## Need to know

### LORDSHIPS GRAFFALO

Age: 10

Breeding: by Grafenstolz, out of Cornish Queen (by Rock King)

Breeder: Lordships Stud, Writtle College

Rider: Ros Canter

Owner: Michele Saul

Greatest achievements: third Gatcombe CCI3\*-S and eighth Le Lion d'Angers seven-year-old World Championships 2019 (both with Tom McEwen while Ros was on maternity leave); second Burnham Market eight- and nine-year-old CCI4\*-S 2020; first Aston-le-Walls CCI4\*-S 2021; second Bicton CCI4\*-L 2021; first Blair Castle CCI4\*-S 2021; second Blenheim CCI4\*-L 2021; second Badminton CCI5\* 2022.