

Techno whizzes

There's a growing trend towards top riders using gadgets for training and competing. What are they and how could they give you the competition edge this season? Stephanie Bateman investigates



WITH the competition season just around the corner, it's paramount that riders stay one step ahead of the game. Keeping up to date with performance-enhancing kit is crucial, but do our riders see it as a gimmicky fad or a way of getting the winning edge?

Olympic dressage rider Laura Tomlinson believes that technology is a great way to outwit the competition but asks whether the UK is keeping up.

"It's a very English attitude just to get your head down and crack on regardless and we aren't always the best at embracing new ways to help ourselves," she says. "A lot of it does come down to money, but if we want to keep up with the rest of the world, we have to accept new ideas."

Double Olympic gold medallist Ingrid Klimke agrees: "Technology is taking off in the equestrian world because riders want to stay a step ahead."

Getting to the heart of it

"ANYTHING that allows us to know more about the horse's inner workings is a worthy investment," says Jamie Peel of GOW Equine, a company that provides performance analysis to the polo industry.

Jamie uses a piece of kit called **equinITY**, which consists of a lightweight girth sleeve fitted with an equine-specific heart rate monitor and a GPS device.

Speed, heart rate, stride, split times and location are livestreamed onto a smartphone or tablet, which

illustrates and analyses the information, producing reports and enabling the user to compare data.

"I use it mainly with polo ponies and racehorses in rehab," Jamie explains. "The heart rates can tell us a lot about how stressed the horse is and whether he is in pain. And it's really good for injury prevention."

The equinITY kit is also useful in other disciplines.

"Heart rate and distance are the two main readings used in polo, but you can use it for recovery training and fitness training in any discipline," says Jamie.

At over £1,000 to buy, and with annual "top-up fees" of £600, equinITY isn't cheap, but for those who can afford it, it is a worthy investment.

Another, more affordable, heart rate monitor is the newly launched **ClockIt** (£79), developed by Saracen

equinITY can livestream data such as heart rate and split times to a tablet or smartphone



FilmMe zooms in and out automatically on the rider and can livestream the footage

Horse Feeds and Kentucky Equine Research (KER). It tracks the horse's intensity and length of exercise, and sends the data to an app, which allows the rider to assess and evaluate post-exercise.

Showjumper Philip Spivey uses the monitor.

"The ClockIt is not only quick and easy to use, but it helps me to establish fitness regimes and see how individual horses react in different situations," he says. "It produces information that we can then share with vets and other professionals."

Lights, camera, action!

ENCOURAGING someone to stand in an arena filming you while you ride is a challenge, but imagine the possibilities if all you had to do was press a button and your every move was captured automatically?

FilmMe is a videoing system that follows the rider, automatically zooming in and out, from the moment they press the button on the FilmMe wristband.

The system can be installed in any arena and stream HD footage instantly via the internet, meaning that the rider can receive live coaching from their trainer, even if they're in another location.

The footage is automatically uploaded to the user's own FilmMe account, ready to be shared or viewed. The price starts from £12,000.

Laura Tomlinson is an avid user of FilmMe.

"Even if I am on my own, I can film a whole session of training with the push of a button," she says. "I can then share it with my trainer remotely."

"It's so useful for going back over certain movements, and it's better than looking in the mirrors because a video shows you the whole picture. It's also great for tracking progress and training clients — you can offer a video of their session to take away and use as reference."

Analysis improves performance

BEING able to relive your cross-country round and analyse where things went wrong is key to improving performance, and if you can engage spectators at the same time, all the better.

SAP Equestrian Analytics (SAP) is developing a camera that attaches to the rider's helmet and combines with software to track routes, speed data, time gaps, and heart rates of the horse and rider. The combination helps riders fine-tune their training.

Ingrid Klimke used the camera at Aachen in 2014. The video captured the action on the cross-country course, and data and video were merged in a way that allowed the spectators to experience the action from the rider's perspective via an app.

"In eventing, especially cross-country, your speed and line is everything," says Ingrid. "This data allowed me to analyse where I was too slow or too fast and where I could have taken a better line — information which is vital to improving performance."

"You can watch a DVD of your round, but you don't see it from a rider's view, only from the side, and it doesn't show you your speed and line."

"They are developing the app so that spectators can follow a horse and rider combination on the course. It makes it interactive and more interesting for the spectators, which is good for the sport."

Too hot, sir?

IT'S a never-ending battle deciding which rugs to put on your horse and worrying whether he is too hot or too cold.

But not any more. Horseware's new **Turnout App** gathers data from weather forecasts for the coming three days, and makes a recommendation on which Horseware turnouts will best suit the conditions.

"My horses get as much turnout time as possible and many of them live out at night," says eventer Sam Watson. "The app gives me a weather forecast and rug recommendations in a matter of seconds. It removes the guesswork so that the horses maintain condition and keep a super shine on their coat."

The 'connected' saddle

FRENCH saddle company Voltaire is gearing up to launch its new **Blue Wing** "smart saddle" in the UK later this year. This boasts a revolutionary smart tree and panel system that tracks the time spent at each gait and at each direction, as well as the rhythm and symmetry of your horse.

Among other things, the mobile application allows you to view a calendar of your sessions and provides information on the intensity of each session.

Prices start from \$6,900 (£4,760). **H&H**



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