

Oslo—  
stripped  
bare

William Fox-Pitt's ride Oslo is both one of the most promising event horses in the world and the potential sire of another generation of stars. Pippa Rooome talks to his rider and calls on lan Stark for an expert assessment

**C**OULD you ask for more from a young event horse than what William Fox-Pitt's ride Oslo has done? Beating both his peers and older campaigners at every level (see factfile, right), Oslo has enjoyed a meteoric rise, culminating in victory at Pau in his first four-star last year at just nine years old.

"He's always been quite precocious," says William. "I'm bringing my young horses on steadily and he's the first one I've competed in the spring of his five-year-old year or had ready for Le Lion d'Angers at six."

"Oslo takes life in his stride. Nothing really tests him and he doesn't get stressed by any part of his work, which is unusual—most horses have to work at something. He's got great confidence and self-belief, which makes him a very enjoyable horse to ride."

William adds that Oslo's good conformation is a real strength: "You always look for that because it will help the horse stay sound and perform well, but it's actually quite rare."

"A horse with good conformation and balance will always be easier to train and produce. We never have to look at him and think we want to build him up here and there. He has an incredibly powerful loin and second thigh."

"This spring will be about consolidation for Oslo. He's unlikely to tackle a four-star, but will run in some CIC<sup>1</sup>\*, which will probably include Chatsworth. After that, it's up to the British Olympic team selectors."

"He's potentially got a big year ahead, but he'll need to put in some good performances and be on the form of his life to get selected," says William, who also has Bingham winner Paradise

## THE BODY

"As a competition horse, Oslo is nearly the ideal type," says lan Stark. "He's got power and a huge amount of presence. He's got a lovely eye, ears and expression—you can see he's got a 'what do you want me to do now?' attitude."

lan echoes William regarding Oslo's temperament: "He looks laid back, too, as if he finds it all easy, and he's certainly coping with everything in his career so far with ease."

He goes on: "This side view of Oslo is lovely and his front half is almost perfect. He's got an open, sloping shoulder. You can see from the shape of his neck and the open angle of his head to his neck, how easy he finds it to work on the bit in self-carriage."

"I'd never noticed it under saddle, but to nitpick a little when he's stripped down, he's a bit short in his quarters. There's not a lot of room from his croup down to his tail and maybe the tail is set a little high, which contributes to this."

"This compactness wouldn't worry me in an event horse, but you'd pick up on his lack of length here if you were judging him in a show hunter class—but you'd still put him in at the front of the line!"

Hawk and Lionheart—another 10-year-old who was third at Pau—was potential mounts for Greenich.

## I wish we had more straws

Oslo was bred in France by Philippe Briovis, by the Sydney Olympic showjumping individual silver medalist Lando. William first saw him at Le Lion as a four-year-old stallion, but thought he was a little small.

He was still underwhelmed when owner Eric Antiger brought Oslo to Britain to a sale at Russ Harley's yard, but joked that if he didn't sell, he'd be happy to take him as a gift.

Unsold, Oslo ended up in Dorset and, after he'd spent a month in the yard, William was so impressed by him that he got together the 10 shares which make up the Fox-Pitt Eventing Partnership.

The horse was gelded at the end of his five-year-old year and the team also decided to drop the suffix to his name, "Stax".

"Bats is the stud name where he was bred, but it was unpronounceable in English," says William. "He was laid back, but I felt he had a better chance of going to the top as a gelding, or of being sold as a nice horse if he wasn't top class."

Oslo's semen was collected at West Kingston Stud before he was gelded—there are about 60 straws.

"Not enough!" says William, now. "I wish we'd taken more off him, but we didn't know how good he'd turn out to be another season was on us and we were running out of time."

The horse is advertised on William's website for a stud fee of £2,000/NAT (no foal no fee) and William says: "He has plenty of interest, but I'm quite fussy."

So far Oslo has sired two three-year-olds—one is with Laura Collett and one with Catherine Butler, owner of the former Fox-Pitt ride Be Animas. Another "half a dozen" are due this year.

Look out for mini Oslo eventing in the future. H&H



## THE FRONT VIEW

"The proverb isn't too positive about horses with three white socks, but judging by Oslo that's obviously a complete odd wives' tale," laughs lan. "However, his one white foot in front makes this view look slightly uneven, although his legs are actually well matched."

He's not completely straight in front, though, and his feet are quite narrow, although they look strong and sound.

"He's got great room in his front legs—and depth in the girth when seen from the side—and muscle on his forearms, even though these pictures were taken when he'd only been in work a couple of weeks so wasn't eventing fit."

"A lot of that is correct schooling, but he also has a natural ability to put on muscle in the right places."



## THE BACK VIEW

"I really like this back view," continues lan. "A horse needs to look in balance standing still, with a leg at each corner. Oslo stands four-square on his legs and his hindquarters give a tremendous impression of power."

"Oslo's way of going and movement seem him eight or nine in the dressage area and he's always in beautiful balance and self-carriage. All that springs from his excellent conformation."

"William Fox-Pitt has—and has had—a lot of lovely horses, but this one's as good as any I've seen. His natural balance may make him the ideal horse for galloping up and down the hairy hills at his summer's London Olympics."

## FACTFILE OF A CHAMPION



36.29H BAY GELDING, 10 YEARS OLD

Breeder: Philippe Briovis

Owner: Fox-Pitt Eventing Partnership

Rider: William Fox-Pitt

## BEST RESULTS

1st Le Lion d'Angers six-year-old World Championship 2008, 2nd Tattersalls CIC<sup>1</sup> and 2nd Le Lion d'Angers seven-year-old World Championship 2009, 2nd Beller Castle CIC<sup>1</sup> 2010, 3rd Outworn CIC<sup>1</sup>, 1st Tattersalls CIC<sup>1</sup>, 1st Barmston night, 1st New Year's old CIC<sup>1</sup> and 1st Pau CIC<sup>1</sup> 2011

Oslo has recorded eight top-three placings at international competitions

WILLIAM FOX-PITT  
ON OSLO

"He's a very well-balanced horse who is up in front, but with a powerful engine from behind. Those two assets are his main strengths"

"He breezes through life—hopefully he's ready for all the challenges that lie ahead!"

lan Stark: "He's got an open, sloping shoulder and you can see from the shape of his neck how easy he finds it to work in self-carriage"

Listen to William Fox-Pitt explain how the Fox-Pitt Eventing Partnership works in our exclusive video. Watch by scanning this QR code on your smartphone or go to [www.horseandhound.co.uk/oslo](http://www.horseandhound.co.uk/oslo). If you don't have a QR reader app, there are free ones available online.

