

■ **BIG DATE:** Bill Levett on Norwegian Connection NJ.

Experience pays for Aussie Levett

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AUSTRALIAN international Bill Levett will join leading British and foreign eventers at the British Open Showjumping Championships at Birmingham's NEC.

Levett, who lives in Chipping Campden, secured his place in the British Open Indoor Cross-country Championship, after scoring a superb win at the Addington Equestrian Centre qualifier near Buckingham.

The qualifier offered three tickets to the Championships, where those already invited include reigning world champion Zara Phillips.

Nearly 50 eventers tackled the qualifier's tricky mixed course of showjumping and cross-country fences.

The lead changed several times during the competition, held against the clock.

"It was a really strong class and everyone was having a go," said Levett, who won on the evergreen Norwegian Connection NJ, who is 17 this year.

"The course was not easy. You needed to move forward on the showjumping side to make up time but had to keep balanced for the cross-country section, where the fences came up very fast in a tight arena.

"You really needed an experienced horse who could think on his feet."

Norwegian Connection NJ, who competed at four star level with Levett including a crack at Badminton, is now



Healey's horses

with our equestrian expert Kate Healey

being evented by his wife Jenny.

"Jenny is hoping to take him to the Hartpury two-star three-day event and I might do a few more competitions on him," said Levett.

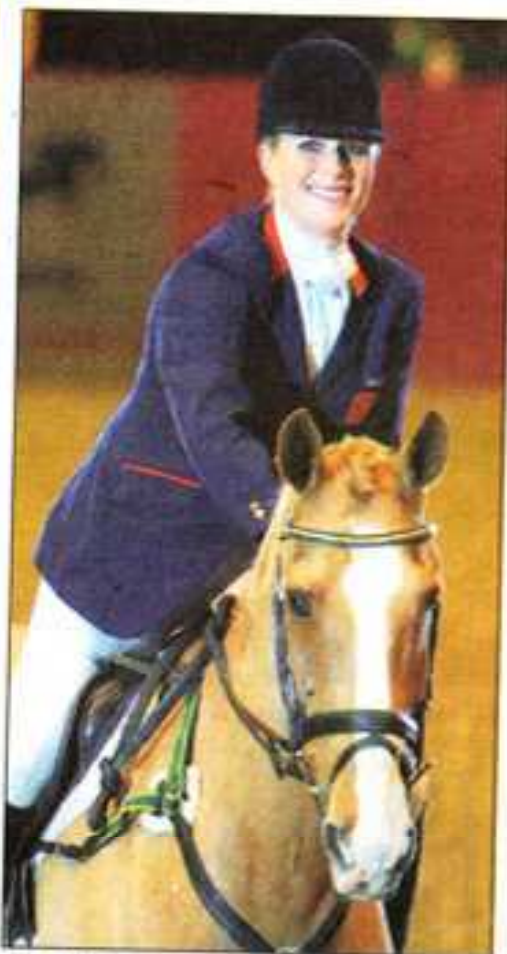
"I have 10 horses to compete this year though, so I may leave him to my wife."

Levett will be aiming new ride Hunters Legend, previously ridden by Tristram Owers and Dominic Ruane, at Badminton this May.

The Indoor Cross-country Final at the British Open Showjumping Championships will have two sections this year.

The main individual title and a Power and Speed cross-country competition which will pair top showjumpers and eventers together against the clock.

The Championships will be held from April 3-6. Call the Box Office on 08700 100 216 for tickets, or visit the official website at www.britishopenshowjumping.com.



■ **STAR ATTRACTION:** Zara Phillips.

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