

■ Will it be alright on the night at Badminton? Only Time Will

# Charlie is their darling at event



**T**HERE will be fingers and just about everything else crossed in the pretty little Worcestershire hamlet of Porter's Mill this coming weekend, as one of its best-looking residents faces the biggest challenge, both physically and mentally, of his life.

At the age of 12, Charlie is mixing it with the world's best and all his fans just hope he comes out in one piece.

Incidentally, Charlie is a horse.

His proper name is Time Will Tell VI and this handsome 16.1hh thoroughbred gelding is among the starting line-up for the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials, the supreme test in the vertiginous equestrian sport of three-day eventing.

Born in Australia he might have been, but now one of his joint owners is Mrs Veronica Wootten of Mill Hall, Porter's Mill, about equidistant between

Worcester and Droitwich, where Charlie spends his vacations.

The trip to Badminton will far exceed the expectations of Mrs Wootten and her co-owner Mrs Carol Good, of Bradley Green, for when the pair decided to invest in an eventer, they had no such dreams in sight.

## ■ Other hopefuls

AMONG other Worcestershire entries at Badminton, which runs from today until Sunday, will be Greg Dickens from New Wood Lane, Blakedown, Kidderminster, riding Woodfield Easy Street, Nigel Tabor of Lybrook Farm, Broadway, on Go With The Flow IV and, probably the county's best hope of success, Olympic silver medallist Leslie Law from Inkberrow, who has three entries, of which he can ride only two, Shear H20, Shear L'Eau and Brer Rabbit II.

"I thought we'd have some fun at novice level," Mrs Wootten said. "I never imagined it would get to this. I'll be shaking with nerves all weekend. I just hope he's all right."

Charlie will line up against the top event horses from

all over the world to tackle dressage, show jumping and the daunting cross-country course on the Duke of Beaufort's Gloucestershire estate.

It'll be a far cry from the racetrack in Australia, where the horse spent his early days.

"He ran on the flat in Australia and won a good race, before being bought by a family who introduced him to eventing," Mrs Wootten explained.

Charlie was bought by Australian event rider Bill Levett, who met Veronica Wootten when she went to his stud at Chipping Campden to look at another horse.

"I got chatting to Bill and thought it would be a bit of fun if I had an interest in an event horse I could follow.

"I asked my co-owner whether she would like to join me as we crossed the desert in Botswana on holiday.

"She agreed, so Bill bought Charlie as a suitable prospect when he went back to Australia looking for event horses for his main sponsors."

However, the horse nearly didn't survive the journey back to England.

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