

Press release  
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## Manfeild's arena applauded

Caption: Maurice Beatson, with his horse Jedi Warrior, says the new outdoor equestrian arena perfectly complements the world-class Manfeild Stadium facility.

THE addition of an outdoor arena to complement the indoor equestrian surface within the award-winning Manfeild Stadium brings the Feilding facility to premier status.

That view is expressed by a legend of the showjumping scene, Dannevirke's Maurice Beatson.

The new Manfeild surface won plaudits from competitors when used for the first time in early December, 2009, for a compulsory round of the World Cup Showjumping Series.

That was no great surprise to Mr Beatson, an accomplished multiple title winner on the national and international scene and also a former Olympian, having represented New Zealand at the 1988 Seoul Games.

"This is right up there," said Mr Beatson, who has 40 years' competition experience, after trying out the additional surface.

"It's become one of the top venues," he said of Manfeild.

"They're all different but this is a very nice facility, as good as anywhere in the world."

Suitable for both warmup and actual competition, the 80 metre by 56 metre outdoor arena will hold Manfeild in good stead for future events of all scales - local, national and international - he believes.

He already had high regard for the 18-month-old Manfeild Stadium, at 7750 square metres the largest facility of its kind in the lower North Island, and was a driving force in seeing the \$12 million building become the venue of choice for the December 11-12 showjumping event.

It seemed remarkable that this key competition, from which New Zealand's finest are chosen for international duty, used to be held overseas - because New Zealand could not provide a suitable venue.

That's all changed. The only thing Manfeild lacked when the round was secured as a highlight of the annual Feilding I A and P Show was the outdoor warm-up and competition surface.



That issue was resolved swiftly - it was built in under two weeks once funding had been confirmed from Eastern & Central Community Trust and Endeavour Trust, with top Manawatu firm Higgins Contractors shrugging off all that Nature could throw at the project to complete the job the day before competition began.

It was a great job, that has delivered a great addition, he said.

"You've got to have good jumping surfaces these days because the sport has become more professional and you cannot ask horses to jump on ground that is not suitable.

"It's a long-term thing. If you have good surfaces you can run bigger shows, and that means more competitors, more money and makes the facilities more viable. This is perfect."

Previously all outdoor equestrian competition has been on grass, which raised challenges, Mr Beatson said.

"The issue has been the clay content of the grassed area, so when it's wet it gets wetter than normal, and when it's dry it bakes harder than normal - you get two extremes, and that has been a challenge.

"Outside jumping surfaces have to be of a top quality. Competitors don't want to compete on surfaces that are not good for their horses.

"So in that respect this new outside area is a huge breakthrough and a key part of Manfeild's development."

A mix of crusher dust atop of a lime bed built upon compacted gravel provided a premier, all-season surface, he said.

"The great thing about this new outdoor surface is that it is essentially suitable for every day of the year.

"Long-term, this will last forever. The key is the maintenance, but a surface like this is easy to keep up to scratch. It's so much better than grass, which needs mowing, growing, filling in holes and what have you."

Will it help future aspirants to international career - is it what we need to help hone future Olympians and Commonwealth Games contenders?

"It'll help, yes, though there's still that big jump to get overseas. There are several indoor equestrian establishments around New Zealand but not as big, or as good as this.

"The thing is to go forward and improve - as Manfeild now shows, the better the facility, the more people you'll get here."

The Manfeild round was won by Katie McVean, 23, of Cambridge, on 12-year-old breeding stallion Corofino II. Her other horse, Dunstan Delphi, placed second.

The win in the Manawatu Standard round took her to the top of the World Cup qualifying standings with a six-point buffer over another professional rider, Julie Davey (Hastings), and seven over Waipukurau's Simon Wilson, the previous leader.