

## Walking the course will never be the same again

Back in the 1990's only riders at three day events would be seen pushing metre wheels around their courses. Soon the use of metre wheels filtered down the levels and these days' even riders at introductory level can be seen working out their minute markers. Now with the introduction of the CrossCountry App metre wheels will soon be out-dated, as riders will simply carry their i-phone around the course. You have to admit that's pretty cool.

Jose Diacono, together with her son and daughter, are the brains behind the Crosscountry App and The Eventer caught up with Jose to find out how this App came to be.

Jose, who has a background in IT, enjoys eventing at introductory level. "I have fun at the lower level's of eventing with my 22 year old horse but my daughter Helen takes her eventing more seriously. My business concentrates on the areas

of computer mapping, Google maps, satellite imagery and GPS tracking and it hit me one day that I could use some of that technology and bring it into eventing. Then a short while later I was walking a cross country course and thought there is no reason why we couldn't create an App that could track the course, measure the course, calculate the minute markers and so on. So the idea went over to my son James who is the developer and then onto Helen, the designer, and together the idea started to take shape.

Creating an App involves an awful lot of complicated mathematics and a lot of very deep programming. We had to work out what would happen if the satellite link gets interrupted, or what happens when your phone rings when you are walking the course. So we faced all those problems and then tested, tested and tested again and we are now finding it to be very accurate. The Crosscountry App is as accurate as you can get with an iPhone. Of course you may get a very expensive GPS system to be more accurate, but the iPhone is quite sufficient for our purposes."

Jose's Crosscountry App, which was released on the 23rd



September 2011 was pretty much the first of its kind, although she did discover that a similar product was being released in America at around the same time. But Jose sees this as a good thing. "The spur of competition is always good. The American version

has some good ideas on theirs and we have good ideas on ours so it's all good."

The Crosscountry App is really user friendly – even for someone not particularly used to an iPhone. But if you are unsure there is a 'getting started' clip on the Crosscountry Apps own website ([www.crosscountryapp.com](http://www.crosscountryapp.com)) which will point you in the right direction. From a personal point of view we downloaded the App the night before an event and then managed to figure out how to work it out as we went out on course. (Mind you I have to add that I was very pleased to see Jose just as we started walking). Once you get used to the App you can put as much or as little information into it as you want. Firstly the App maps your course and works out your minute markers, secondly you can take photos or video clips of the fences and record your comments, which you can then listen back to when you get back to your truck. If you take the wrong track when you are walking the course you can simply erase that part and the App will take off again when you are back on track.

So far the reaction of riders has been impressive. "Stuart Tinney agreed to test it, which we were delighted about because Stuart is such a perfectionist and we knew he would really put the App through its paces."

"I am using it at all my one day events with great success. It gives me great information," said Stuart. Meanwhile Shane Rose whilst admitting that he is not the most 'tech savvy' person around said "It's really helpful to me at one day events. Without it I wouldn't measure the courses (because I have too many to walk) but this way I can get an accurate measurement of the course and the minute markers. I can see this App being really helpful to riders of all levels and even I can work it easily!"

Obviously the Crosscountry App is not just for use in



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*Shane Rose*

Australia but worldwide and sales have already been made in Italy, Norway, Denmark, UK and America. "We know it will take time for the word to spread but the guy who does the IT for Badminton gave the App a great review and we did an interview with the Eventing Radio show, which should also help to the word out there."



But Jose's ideas for this App haven't finished yet and she feels there is a lot of potential to build on what they now have. "There are really no bounds for how far you can go with an App it simply comes down to whether the market is willing to pay for what you are doing. We have spent several months getting to where we are now and for a download fee of \$19.99 we feel the event riders are getting really good value for money. So if they are happy – we are happy."



*Left: Stuart Tinney gave the App a good work out.*

*Above: Lauren Balcomb and Helen Diacono make the most of the new Cross Country App.*