

Emma Thomas, 25
GBR

This is a second Defender Burghley for Warwickshire-based British rider Emma Thomas (25). She was 18th here last year on her 2024 ride, Icarus.

Emma studied Biological Sciences at the Royal Veterinary College and in 2021 was selected as a Wesko Foundation rider. She is in her third year as a professional and is the reigning national under-25 champion, having won at Bramham this year. In 2022 she won individual gold at the World Student Showjumping competition.

Emma was a member of the Warwickshire Hunt branch of the Pony Club, having been given her first pony at the age of nine. She went on to win the Pony Club Open Showjumping Championships at Hickstead and the Pony Club Open Eventing Championships. She also represented team Central for three years at the U18 National Championships.

Icarus (Otangelo-Ewivonne (Lucky Boy)), aka 'Sticky', is a 11-year-old, Dutch-bred KWPN gelding, owned by Emma's mother Rebecca Velarde. Emma has had him since a five-year-old, he came from showjumper Jamie Wingrove, from whom she sources a lot of horses. The pair recently finished eighth in the CCI4*-S at Blair Castle.

Emma says: "He's a bit of a wild child in terms of energy and enthusiasm, but he's never tried to chuck me off; he's always adored his job. The first time I jumped a cross pole it took three laps of the field to pull up."

Emma doesn't take him into the cross-country warm-up because he gets too excited – she warms up in a quiet spot and then goes straight into the start box.