

Monica Spencer, 37
NZL

It will be a first Defender Burghley for US-based Kiwi rider Monica Spencer (37) and her ride Artist.

Monica and former racehorse "Max" already have strong five-star form, finishing seventh at Maryland in October 2023 and seventh at Kentucky this spring.

Monica was originally based in New Zealand, but she temporarily moved to the US for the second half of 2023 to prepare for Maryland. She then travelled back to New Zealand before returning to the US in February, along with a string of horses and no return ticket. Her husband Andrew and son Gus have made the move too.

Monica has been riding since a young age. Her mother, Zandria Oakley, an avid equestrian, participated in Pony Club and hunting, and Monica worked her way up through the Pony Club system. After graduating from Paraparaumu College, she began retraining racehorses to event to then sell on.

Her brother's death in 2017 prompted Monica to aim for the top of the sport and she has done so with success, including picking up a team bronze medal at the 2022 World Eventing Championships with Artist.

Artist (Guillotine-Maxamore (Satin Blush)), owned by Spencer Eventing, is a New Zealand thoroughbred-bred 13-year-old gelding, who was bred by Windsor Park Stud Ltd. A former racehorse, Monica purchased Max as a four-year-old as he was deemed "too slow" for the track. Together they dominated the Kiwi eventing scene before contesting his first five-star last October at Maryland where he finished seventh. He was also a member of the bronze medal-winning team at the 2022 World Eventing Championships and more recently finished seventh in the five-star at Kentucky this spring.