

Feature *Insider*

Many of you will already know that my work is full of varied projects, from my life as an actor and TV presenter. I constantly work within an extensive range of all things equestrian too, not only with the TV side of things but also including running the family equestrian centre, playing professional polo and as a director of the UK's leading jousting school and show team! I also have a passion for bringing the sport of Jousting back to the 21st Century, but with a modern twist by way of The Knights of Middle England!



Knight Moves

Joust do it!

with 'The Insider' Karl Ude Martinez

The medieval era with all its pageantry, competition and participation has been responsible for making the sport of jousting one of the finest and most colourful sports in our history. The customs and traditions are part of the elegance that makes a jousting tournament on the most unusual equestrian sporting events ever witnessed.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, JOUSTING IS BACK!

Even though our live shows and displays season does not start until April - our Jousting School has been non-stop throughout the winter. Even with the economic climate the way it is many people are still coming to "Try their hand at Jousting!"

Once upon a time, heroes of the joust were as famous as Premiership footballers. Then along came gunpowder and the glamour, girls and gauntlets went up in smoke. But I have been on a mission to bring it back and re-create this legend in England. In the USA, it's the state sport of Maryland, so being very patriotic and having a country with more History than all of the 52 states of the USA put together, us 'Brits' can't have that!

Jousting was the Premiership football of its day; thousands of people used to turn up to watch tournaments, from peasants to the royals, all eating, drinking and cheering on their favourite Knight. You cheer on Beckham or Rooney from the stands so instead you scream out your favourite Knights name as he came galloping towards his opponent! This is the stuff that little boys' dreams are made of, and for one day - clad from helm to boots in flamboyant replica armour - members of the public can celebrate to the full. They can be taught how to compete in the original sport of kings!

It's part of our tradition, and we're trying to keep it alive! It stirs the blood. The colours, the smells, the sounds. It speaks to

something deep in our past.

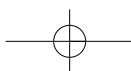
I am convinced it can become a competitive sport again. My model would be the USA where jousting is huge. They have leagues like our football leagues, especially in Maryland and Virginia, where teams compete every weekend. They take it very seriously - a little too seriously sometimes! The season, based around ring jousting rather than one-on-one duels, runs from April to October, culminating in state and national championships.

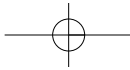
What they do over there could easily take off over here and I'd love to be the one who drives that along.

Jousting was imported to England from France around the time of the Norman invasion in the 11th century. Starting as little more than an excuse for petty fighting between local nobles, it gradually became more spurt-oriented, adopting a set of rules based around the themes of honour and chivalry, a term itself derived from the French word for knight: chevalier.

Large tournaments were held around the country, in which points were scored by hitting an opponent's shield, knocking him from his horse or splintering a lance.

By the 16th century however, the deaths of several nobles and serious injuries to a number of monarchs, including Henry VIII in 1536, led to the demise of jousting.





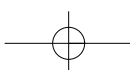
JOUST FACTOR

The Knights of Middle England's main highlight of their 2009 show season was, undoubtedly, the audition for the 'H Factor', an equestrian themed talent competition. Think *X factor* but horses! Following the success of *Strictly come Dancing* and *Dancing on Ice* there was a gap in the market!! This is the first of its kind and it will premiere the top talent in equestrian shows.

The winner will have the opportunity to perform their show at the prestigious international 'Horse of the Year Show' at the NEC in Birmingham in October 2010. We are through to the final and will be performing our modern day twist show with knights battling it out to a spectacular show of rock and roll music, hard-hitting jousting, stunts, fire and fast galloping horses at 'The British Open Show Jumping Championships' at the NEC in April this year. The audience will text their votes alongside celebrity judges who vote each night to see which display will make it through!

We are asking for the readers of The Equestrian Lifestyle Magazine to come and support us at the Open and to text their votes for The Knights of Middle England to help them win the "H Factor"!

For more information on our quest to win, and how you can support us by being at the equestrian event of the year keep checking online.



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The subsequent introduction of gunpowder, which made horse-mounted lancers obsolete, sealed the sport's fate.

You 2 Can B A Knight 4 A Day: The Knights of Middle England Medieval Jousting Experience Days give a brilliant opportunity for aspiring members of the public wanting to give it a go - to literally, experience the thrill of riding down the tilt with lance in hand, just as the much-fabled knights of olde.

My aim is to make the sport of jousting accessible to everyone so our trainee knights are totally spoilt compared to those of olde but the day is certainly challenging.

As soon as you arrive you are given your own knight's tabard & Coat of Arms, some chain mail, and you've everything to fight for!"

The 'Knights of Middle England introduction to Jousting' or "Be a Knight for the day!" have become quite renowned over the last 5 years. We have already given hundreds of trainee knights an unforgettable day at our specially equipped jousting school and themed medieval hall, located in Warwick, which not being too far from the infamous Warwick Castle, is a perfect setting for the jousting team.

Amid plenty of banter and laughter, each participant is given a step-by-step introduction to jousting on horseback in a very basic but fun level and with safety being at the forefront of every activity. We continue to teach people from all walks of life how to



STAG & HEN 'KNIGHTS'

We also pride ourselves on the range of services we offer and have seen a continued rise in our "Unique Stag & Hen Knight" packages with groups opting for our exciting great value weekends with a complete difference that are open to anyone! Challenging and fun as grooms or brides-to-be get together with best friends to don some medieval costumes/armor and become Lords and Ladies of the Realm.

There are half day, full day and complete weekend knight package for hen and stag groups that includes; Jousting activities on horseback, sword fighting training and option of archery or falconry, lunch, a huge hog roast dinner with much merriment in the medieval hall plus all drinks and B&B accommodation on site all included.

A Stag or Hen "Knight" they will never forget and plenty of chances to embarrass the man or woman of the day!

learn to joust, even those who have never sat on a horse before in their lives - not even a donkey! Being able to ride can be an advantage in certain activities but we do accept people that have never ridden and they enjoy the day just as much. Jousting, and the authentic medieval mounted games, require a different type of equestrian skill and all our horses and instructors can accommodate any standard of horsemanship!

Wannabe Knights will learn to ride their steed with one hand, use a lance and strike the dreaded "Quintaine" man shaped spinning target. They will then try their hand at the "Gauntlet Challenge" competition for points and prizes with the the climax of the day being an attempt to unseat the nasty "Black Knight" from his horse in a mini joust! All in one day!

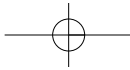
These days run from approx 10am-5pm and can include lunch packages of a traditional tasty Hog Roast or fine country riverside pub lunch.

They are open to men & women and are fast becoming one of the top 10 Experience Days choices in the UK.

We run the experience days throughout the year so, if this adrenaline charged day sounds like the perfect gift experience for your loved one or a friend, book now with The Knights of Middle England!

No riding experience necessary - Minimum age - 16yrs - 21st Century safety rules apply!





CORPORATE JOUSTING DAYS

Businesses are also becoming intrigued with the idea of Corporate Jousting Days, and again this year, despite the lack of corporate funds, our team building days with a difference are going from strength to strength!

Even though the majority of the employees have never sat on a horse before, we ensure a challenging, yet accomplishable day for all abilities. This is a corporate day with a twist, forget the orienteering or paintball – this is for the latest serious corporate contenders!

LOVE IS IN THE AIR!

On a more romantic note, the chivalrous knights have been in demand around the country to perform many a 'Guard of Honour' for a number of happy couples on their wedding day at both churches and receptions. That involves us sending some handsome knights and their steeds to greet your guests on arrival and create a beautiful and colourful backdrop to your special day. We have also helped many brides' dream weddings come true by leading them on a beautiful white charger to or from the church or entertaining their guest with their very own private Jousting Show.

Some grooms to be have even used our services to Propose to their loved ones in a true chivalrous style - dressed as a gallant and heroic knight in shining armour astride a

horse, they have popped the question!

This Valentine's day why not treat your real true knight with something different – Ask him to take up the challenge of a "jousting experience day" in your honour as in days of olde.

He must ride with your 'favour' tied to his lance or around his arm, and learn how to master his steed, hit the targets and battle it out in the 'Gauntlet Challenge' to then climax by warding off the threats of the Black Knight!

Valentine Jousting vouchers available to buy now – both of you come as "Couple Jousting" and receive a massive 20% off your booking!



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE KNIGHTS OF MIDDLE ENGLAND AND THE RANGE OF SERVICES THEY OFFER PLEASE
TEL: 01926 400 401 EMAIL: INFO@KNIGHTSOFMIDDLEENGLAND.CO.UK OR VISIT WWW.KNIGHTSOFMIDDLEENGLAND.CO.UK**

KARL UDE MARTINEZ'S WEBSITE WWW.KARLUDEMARTINEZ.CO.UK

