

ZARA PHILLIPS IS perched on an upturned bucket, brow furrowed, deep in conversation with a ruddy-faced vet as he flexes the hind leg of a rather handsome chestnut horse. An assembled group scrutinises the animal's gait as a stable-girl takes the reins and, together, they elegantly trot up and down. It's a sort of morning Pilates for horses, I'm told, to check all is in order, and is just a regular day at work for the daughter of Princess Anne, cousin to Princes William and Harry, and second cousin to three-month-old Prince George.

This is Zara's world and despite being five months pregnant, her zipped, quilted puffer vest concealing the Queen's fourth great-grandchild, it's business as usual for the avid horsewoman.

We're at Zara's stables on her mum's Gatcombe Park estate in the heart of England's green, pleasant and, today, rather rain-sodden Cotswolds. Here, Zara and her rugby player husband, Mike Tindall, live in a modest stone cottage right next to the arena where Zara trains her horses and a stone's throw from the smart and busy stables where her valuable, much-loved and very important charges sleep.

The last time *The Weekly* interviewed Zara, some 12 months ago, she was on a high having just won 2012 Olympic silver in the team eventing on High Kingdom, known more affectionately here as "Trev" (short for Trevor) and happy to pose with his rider for our photos today. Back then, Zara told me starting a family was in her sights, but a good way off. So much for best-laid plans ...

"It probably happened quicker than we thought – bit of a shock really," says Mike, laughing, conceding that once the shock had worn off, the pregnancy's timing proved pretty spot-on. The baby is due in January, which means Zara will still be on track to train for the major competitions in 2014. >

ZARA PHILLIPS & MIKE TINDALL

"I hope we're going to make good parents ... that's the plan"

In their first interview as an expectant couple, Zara Phillips and Mike Tindall talk to **Juliet Rieden** about what sort of parents they hope to be, the secret to their relationship and their exciting joint ventures in horse racing on opposite sides of the globe.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MICHELLE HOLDEN** STYLING BY **JO SAWKINS**

ADDITIONAL STYLING BY JAMELA DUNCAN. HAIR AND MAKE-UP BY CAMILLA HEWITT. ZARA WEARS RIPE MATERNITY DRESS, ROBERT BURTON TRENCH COAT AND CALLEJA JEWELS THROUGHOUT. MIKE WEARS R.M. WILLIAMS JEANS AND VEST, SPORTSCRAFT POLO SHIRT FROM MYER. THESE IMAGES HAVE BEEN RETOUCHEDED.

Soon to be three
... Zara Phillips and
Mike Tindall at
Gatcombe Park estate.





Zara has given up riding for now, but is looking forward to getting back in the saddle.

and Mike, and it's something of a miracle they have found a gap for baby Tindall. While Zara is more of a planner, Mike is incredibly laid-back and, together, they are determined the new arrival will fit into their schedules without too much bother.

"Yes, I think it is going to change our life, but then hopefully it will have to work in with our lives as well," says Zara, looking to Mike, who is nodding.

"With me, it's been trying to plan a good time. I missed the Europeans [the European Eventing Championships in August this year], but will try to get back for the Worlds [the World Eventing Championships in August 2014]," says Zara, who is in no doubt that she will be back on her horse immediately after giving birth.

"It's always entertaining seeing eventing children," chips in Mike, with a chuckle. "They're so sort of chilled."

"It's true," says Zara. "They kind of go everywhere because they have to travel round to all the events with their parents. I think that's what we'll do." Of course, Zara was that eventing child, accompanying her mum, Princess Anne, to meets all over the country as she competed, a time Zara recalls with great affection. Those early experiences undoubtedly informed her subsequent passion for horses and competing.

The couple don't know if they're having a boy or a girl. "We want it to be a surprise," says Mike. "I'm really looking forward to it, but I'm not sure how I've prepared. We've been pretty relaxed. We've not sorted a nursery yet. We have ordered some stuff, but we haven't gone further than that."

It's the first time I've seen Zara with her husband and they make an impressively solid, loving and happy team. "I hope we're going to make good parents – that's the plan," says Zara.

"I think we're both quite well-balanced and we're quite laid-back as a couple, so hopefully he or she will pick up on that," says Mike.

Is he good with kids? "I'm a big kid, so I naturally fit right in. It will give me a great reason to play loads of games ..." "Outside!" quips Zara.

For Zara, who has just signed on for another five years as patron for Magic

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media for continuing to ride in the early stages of her pregnancy and protests that friends of hers have ridden right up to eight months. She has now given in – not in response to the critics, but because it's just so darned awkward! "I have been riding, then just hacking, but it's so uncomfortable," says Zara. "So now I'm just on the ground yelling at everyone."

Since they're both professional sportspeople, timing is crucial for Zara



Mike and Zara don't know the sex of their baby yet. "We want it to be a surprise," says Mike.

THIS PAGE: ZARA WEARS R.M. WILLIAMS JEANS AND BLAZER, AND RIPE MATERNITY BLOUSE. OPPOSITE: ZARA WEARS FEATHERS DRESS FROM MYER, MIKE WEARS SPORTSCRAFT JEANS AND BLAZER, AND R.M. WILLIAMS SHIRT.

Millions Racing Women, the arrival of baby Tindall in January next year means she will miss the Australian carnival itself (starting on January 3, 2014), but she promises to come out for future events and hopefully this time with Mike in tow.

They both love Australia. “We met in Australia,” she says, with a grin – and admits they would definitely consider living over here some time when their sporting commitments allow.

The Magic Millions connection is an easy fit for the 32-year-old equestrienne, who is a prime example of the power and calibre of women in the horse world. “We’re trying to encourage more women to become involved in racing and owning racehorses, whether it’s a syndicate or on their own,” she says. “Last year couldn’t have been a better result, with ladies winning the race [the female-owned filly Real Surreal took out the top prize, collecting \$1.47 million], which is what Katie [Page-Harvey, Magic Millions co-owner with husband Gerry Harvey] was gunning for. She’s such an amazing lady. So driven, with fantastic ideas.”

Incredibly, Zara doesn’t own any horses herself – “I train and ride them,” she says – but confesses she was tempted to join a women’s syndicate when she was in Australia earlier this year. Mike, however, is the unlikely owner of Monbeg Dude, a horse he bought somewhat by default and probably with a hangover, in 2008, a purchase his wife was none too pleased about.

“I quite like bidding on the horses just to say you’ve bid,” says Mike. “So I went to the starting bid on this horse just to sort of get it going and, well, no one else bid on it. So, basically, we – well, I – ended up with it.” Having shelled out £12,000 (\$20,262) on the horse and realising he now had to pay to feed, look after and race him, Mike set about cajoling a couple of rugby mates and high-profile trainer Michael Scudamore into joining him in a syndicate.

“I’m used to being on the go and active the whole time, and now it’s quite different. So, yes, I’m baking.”



“It was difficult for the first two years,” Mike admits. “But then we found his niche – it’s got to be long, it’s got to be heavy, but he’s got an engine and, you know, he did really well for us last year, winning the Welsh National. This year, we’re talking about whether we go Grand National with him.”

While horse racing may be a whole new venture for the sportsman, he’s a quick learner. “You’ve got to have one with a big heart, who wants to try. It can be the best athlete in the world but if it doesn’t have the brain or the heart to

put its best foot forward then you’ve got no chance,” he says.

“They’re the same as people,” Zara adds. There’s talk that his missus might take over the horse’s training at some point, but initially, when Mike first told her about buying the gelding, Zara rolled her eyes in disbelief. “I thought it was a stupid idea,” she says. “Horses cost money. But he got lucky and it’s worked out really well.” Definitely. The horse is now worth more than £200,000!

Horse racing and hanging with Britain’s aristocratic hunting, shooting and fishing set is something Mike, the son of a social worker and finance officer, has embraced through his wife. “Before I met Zara, I didn’t go to the meets. I used to work at them on a fish and chip van, at the York races,” he quips. “But I like getting dressed up. I like the tradition. It’s a fun day out.”

Zara says she doesn’t rule out owning a racehorse with Mike, whom she concedes is “good at stats”, but for the moment, they are busy with another baby and, well, baking. “I have been a bit bored,” says Zara. “I’m used to being on the go and active the whole time, and now it’s quite different. So, yes, I’m baking.”

“She’s a very good cook and cooks me everything. I cook, too, but I’m the pudding guy – sticky toffee puddings, chocolate fondants and brownies. I’m very good at following a recipe, whereas Zara’s good at putting her own twist on things,” says Mike.

“It’s true,” says Zara. “I love cooking and will definitely cook for the baby.” That cooking is likely to be in the back of her Oakley horse box, the 26-tonne truck that she personally drives to events and in which she and her crew sleep. It’s starting to sound like a rather delicious childhood for baby Tindall. ■



WATCH THE VIDEO

To see behind-the-scenes footage of our shoot with Zara Phillips and Mike Tindall, download the free **viewa** app (see Contents) and scan this page with your smartphone or tablet.