



GIFT A JUMP ON WORLD

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International showjumping is coming to Manukau – thanks to a Whitford man's "little gift" to his family. The half-completed Brookby arena has been approved by World Cup showjumping officials as a venue for the Pacific League finals in February 1998. Entrepreneur Bruce Drinkrow started building the indoor showjumping centre on his 95-acre farm in November last year for his daughter Kelly (21) an up-and-coming three day eventer, and his wife Greer.

But the arena is so impressive that the World Cup director, Max Ammann, of Switzerland has paid a personal visit and been amazed by the venue's potential. The \$2m stadium will have an internal measurement of 55m wide by 78m long – apparently larger than most of the European arenas.

Due to be operational in May, the centre will boast an upstairs viewing platform with a capacity of 1000 people as well as a wing with stables, a fully equipped hospital and an entertainment section with bar facilities. And a section of the wooden framework which began as "a bit of architectural license" has now been earmarked as a commentary box capable of holding 100 people and a giant television screen. Mr Drinkrow, a civil engineer in Beachlands, is thrilled his private venture "that has gone bloody mad" will help to raise the profile of the country's equestrian riders. "The sport is probably our country's biggest medal winner – but our riders have such a low profile that they're hardly recognised. "John Cottle, the country's leading show jumper, is right over the back fence – I'll be more than happy to see him or any of the top competitors put the arena to good use if it will raise their profiles."

The centre does not yet have a permit to allow public access, but Mr Drinkrow believes Manukau City Council will not object to the arena becoming an international stadium. "It'll just be amazing for showjumping because the population of sport horses around Manukau is greater than anywhere else in the country. He says that now the construction of the arena is speeding up, Kelly and Greer are becoming excited about the impressive family monument. "It was intended to be a private project for Kelly to train her horses and keep them up to speed after the bad winters we've been having – but it seems like things are quietly changing," he laughs. "When I first showed them the set of plans they didn't really mean much to the girls, but now after all that's happened they're getting pretty excited." "I'm not even a horse person – it is Greer and Kelly who are the horse-mad ones – my passion is classic cars. "When the centre is completed, it will be large enough to hold showjumping and dressage, as well as three-a-side polo games. "We're going to make it really lovely – the inside will be cedar panelling and we're putting palms and stone pillars outside. "It's turning into a second job but it is very exciting and I know it'll all be worth it in the end."