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Small business,
big name . . .
How BSI Kitemark™
certification is
helping increase
awareness of the
Champion brand



Champion has been pioneering equestrian safety for 40 years. The company makes a wide variety of protective riding hats and body protectors — all to the same high standards. Though a small business, it's one of the biggest names in the equestrian industry today. The company has held Kitemark certification since 1979 and is certified to ISO 9001 (Quality Management Systems) by BSI.

Champion was founded in 1978, when horse lovers John Ayers and his wife Bridget, owners of a small saddlery business in Wales, realized most riding hats

failed to offer proper protection and decided to make ones that did.

The company's hats — which range from traditional-style riding caps to modern jockey helmets — are handmade in Great Britain to the highest technical specifications.

Designed to protect the skull and brain, Champion hats are worn by more than 50% of the UK's riding population and trusted by many of the world's top riders, including jockeys Ruby and Katie Walsh, three-day eventers Pippa Funnell, Kitty King and Piggy March and dressage rider Sophie Wells, who won gold at the Rio 2016 Paralympics.

Kitemark certification was awarded to the company in its first year of launch. Part of Champion's corporate DNA, it's used across its marketing communications.



Find out more: bsigroup.com



Champion Safety

“We would never put profit before safety. The safety of horse riders is at the heart of all we do. That’s why Kitemark certification is so important to us. It means continuity and consistency, third-party reassurance that we’re meeting and exceeding standards, time after time. Our reputation is built on safety, and the Kitemark underlines that. BSI are synonymous with safety; we are synonymous with safety. Kitemark certification symbolises our promise to our customers.”

Tony Palkowski, technical director, Champion Safety



The client goal

Champion retains a family feel: the Ayers’ daughters, Sarah-Jane and Charlotte, are managing director and finance director respectively. And it continues to innovate. Aiming to protect all riders, wherever they are in the world, it launched in the US in 2018.

The company is in a strong position to expand. For decades, it’s been at the forefront of rider safety. Technical director Tony Palkowski sat on the committee for the public standard for equestrian helmets PAS 015 in the 1990s. The company was manufacturing to the latest European standards four years before they were published — something that helped cement its reputation with the Jockey Club of the UK. Tony Palkowski and Helen Riley, brand manager, continue to sit on the committees that write European standards and other safety and technical standards across the world.

BSI solution

Certification from BSI supports the company’s goals. “The BSI Kitemark stands for safety, and is tried and tested,” says Helen. “It helps to raise awareness of our brand’s message.”

In the US, Kitemark certification is helping Champion increase customer understanding of higher safety levels.

The fact that BSI certifies Champion to ISO 9001, the international standard for quality management systems (QMS), as well as the BSI Kitemark, means visits from BSI auditors are a regular event. It’s all part of the company’s commitment to safety. “We carry out our own QMS audits, and we do those rigorously, everything is measured, but we want independent proof that the system works,” says Tony Palkowski. “We think that’s what our customers deserve.”



Why BSI?

“The BSI Kitemark is recognized by major riding organizations both in the UK and further afield. The question is not ‘Why would you have it?’ but ‘Why wouldn’t you have it?’”

Helen Riley, brand manager, Champion Safety