



Rivals

Jilly Cooper

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Into the cut-throat world of Corinium television comes Declan O'Hara, a mega-star of great glamour and integrity with a radiant feckless wife, a handsome son and two ravishing teenage daughters. Living rather too closely across the valley is Rupert Campbell-Black, divorced and as dissolute as ever, and now the Tory Minister for Sport.

Declan needs only a few days at Corinium to realise that the Managing Director, Lord Baddingham, is a crook who has recruited him merely to help retain the franchise for Corinium. Baddingham has also enticed Cameron Cook, a gorgeous but domineering woman executive, to produce Declan's programme. Declan and Cameron detest each other, provoking a storm of controversy into which Rupert plunges with his usual abandon.

As a rival group emerges to pitch for the franchise, reputations ripen and decline, true love blossoms and burns, marriages are made and shattered, and sex raises its (delicious) head at almost every throw as, in bed and boardroom, the race is on to capture the Cotswold Crown.

Rivals Details

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Author : Jilly Cooper

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Anna says

Original thoughts:

I first read this in my teens in the 80s and loved it. *Riders* was good, but *Rivals* was *goooooooood*. Bonkbusting mayhem at its best, with the added adorability of the romance between Rupert and Taggie, awww!

Today's thoughts:

Continuing my re-romps through the works of bonkbuster queen Jilly Cooper, *Rivals* was second only to *Polo* back in my teens. Bastard bad boy Rupert from *Riders* is finally tamed by the young, shy, quivering, dependable, adorable Taggie, and true to my old memories, their romance is oh so sweet. Watching swaggering serial shagger Rupert try to convince himself that he only has father-like feelings for innocent 19 year old Taggie, as well as the discovery of the dried leaves in his drawer and the airport arrivals scene had me sighing and swooning as much now as they did then, making me feel all warm n' fuzzy n' squishy inside.

The rest of the book couldn't quite live up to my multiple reads and 5 star rating. I still enjoyed all the bed hopping, the punchable 'caring' characters, the affected accents of the social-climbing wannabes, the bed hopping, the gossip, the bitching, the backstabbing, the bed hopping, the experimental teens, the drink-addled midlife crises, the shrieking egomaniacs, the bed hopping and the downright silliness, but I'm older and more world-weary these days and marathon romps wear me out ;-p

5 perfect bonkbusting stars from my teens; 4 nostalgically fun, Rupert and Taggie loving, slightly exhausted stars from now.

Liz Barnsley says

I've been SO thoroughly enjoying my re-read of my pile of Jilly Cooper books - *Rivals* is one of my favourites (although the next one up *Polo* is my *absolute* favourite) due to the character of Declan and the fact that in this one Rupert meets the love of his life for the first time.

Fast, funny and so entertaining I really recommend these - for all people of all ages (ok perhaps 14 and over - I read them first around then!) The perfect pick me up reads.

Sadly I have to put the re-read on hold for a while due to extreme review reading but I will no doubt be back to them soon when I shall enter the world of *Perdita* and *Polo* once more.

Happy Reading Folks!

Natasha Hadleigh says

The date should read, read in August 1990, again in 2005 and every year since. I love this book. It was the first Jilly Cooper I ever read and although I've read them all since it remains my favourite.

Set in the world of television it heaves with strong, handsome, talented men and glamorous, intelligent women. The plot is strong and carries the book and the prose is tight and very witty. It's set in the Rutshire countryside and Jilly gives us a wonderful feel for the area and the remarkable people who live in it. I re-read it in the autumn when I'm tired and starting to feel cold and it never fails to cheer me up. I believe it to be a perfect example of its genre. I won't say more about the plot, it's better not to know what happens the first time and if you've never read a Jilly Cooper start with this one - you won't regret it.

Dangermousie says

[mmmmmm, that ending scene at the airport, with all the clutching and desparate kissing. I approve. (hide spoiler)]

Louise says

You cannot go wrong with a Jilly Cooper during your summer holidays and *Rivals* is no exception to that rule.

It does what it says on the cover and is thoroughly entertaining from the first page to the last. The only slight disappointment is the lack of references to horses and show jumping compared to *Riders*. Fear not, I hear Polo rectifies this and it is certainly on my list of books to read next since technically it is still summer even though I am no longer on holiday.

Tanja Berg says

Rating 3* out of 5. One star deduction for excessive length. The previous book in the series "*Riders*" was even longer - over 900 pages - but I did not want it to end. "*Rivals*" wasn't as interesting. The format probably contributed as well, reading books over 500 pages on kindle is quite dreary in itself.

I wish I would have read this when I was 17! The sleazy decadance would have rid me of any romantic illusions, or rather, delusions, and perhaps prevented me from learning the hard way. "*Rivals*" must have been the "mummy porn" of the eighties. My goodness. Everyone lusts for each other, there is back-stabbing, affairs and counter-affairs en masse.

One of the biggest reasons that I picked up this book was to find out what happened with Rupert's wronged wife Helen. She was left in quite a state at the end of "*Riders*". Well, turns out she's happily married and that's about it. Other than Rupert, none of the characters from "*Riders*" make much of an appearance. Of course, Rupert was the arch-villain in "*Riders*" and in "*Rivals*" he's made to appear quite nice. Misguided, but nice.

Rupert, the super tv-star Declan and a few others are making a rival bid for a tv franchise. It is currently being run by the sleazy and horrible Tony, who is quite sure he will be able to keep the franchise. There are dozens of characters, they all appear to be sleeping together in different constellations and occasionally it's

quite difficult to keep them apart. It's a blur. Not all of it. Rupert, Declan, his 18-year old dyslectic daughter Taggie, Tony, the female producer Cameron are all quite clear-cut, unique. The only one who is not horrible in some way is sweet, misunderstood Taggie, whom everyone takes advantage of.

Certainly this book is readable enough, but it would have been much better if some of the side-tracks and subplots had been edited away. Seven hundred pages consisting mostly of who's-sleeping-with-whom is a bit much. It's very educational though. Highly recommended if you're younger than twenty.

Claire (Book Blog Bird) says

Following on a few years from where *Riders* leaves off, *Rivals* throws us back into the saddle (see what I did there) in Rutshire, where Rupert Campbell-Black is now Tory (of course) Minister for Sport. Freshly divorced from Helen, he is literally shagging anything that comes within a ten-metre radius of his penis and casually sticking two fingers up to his conquests' husbands while he does it.

New to Rutshire is Declan O'Hara, an Irish talk show host with a gloriously shambolic wife and three teenage kids. Declan's been hired to be the star attraction at Corinium Television, but it soon becomes clear that he's only been hired to help Corinium keep the TV franchise. After a cataclysmic fall-out, Declan storms off only to be joined by other disgruntled Corinium staff and, in a random turn of events, Rupert and Billy once the true nature of Corinium's chief exec comes to light.

So what do a load of posho showjumping types do when faced with such dastardly deeds? Why, they form their own consortium to pitch for the TV franchise, of course! Because the transition from showjumping to television production is the natural course of events.

I'm being mean. I actually loved this book for many reasons, some of which being:

- 1) It has a red stiletto on the cover
- 2) Rupert Campbell-Black falls in love. Like, actually in love.
- 3) It's so eighties, it should be a crime

For me, this was actually a better read than *Riders*, which spent far too long going on about the rules and regulations surrounding international showjumping. Whatever. Jilly Cooper's writing is a lot tighter here and while *Rivals* doesn't exactly break moulds, it's a hilariously gripping read.

Catherine Robertson says

Jilly, my affection for you has lead me to keep reading, way, way past the point when you became unreadable. (There's debate about when this occurred. For me the tipping point was *Pandora*. For some it was SCORE! The exclamation mark was too much to bear.) For me, *Rivals* is the ultimate Jilly, though I know many would say *Riders* cannot be bettered. But Rupert finds love. How can you beat that?

Lorna says

Oh, the shame: I actually loved this. It was utterly barking, and bears no relation to real life, but it's really awfully funny. There are a lot of horses, dogs, quails' eggs, muddy range rovers, agas and one hilariously snobby woman who puts toilet cleaner in her garden fountains. Honestly, it's great fun.

Daisy says

I always come back to Jilly Cooper when I am sad, ill, dealing with a little hearbreak..her writing is exactly what i need as an easy escape from reality but it is not superficial or badly written by any means. All of her novels are intensely researched and the characters are great. Her books are satisfying, and I can never put them down. They've helped me through some crappy times. Riders, Polo and Rivals are my favourite from the chronicles. The O'Hara's are such a loveable family, and I am not irritated by Taggie at all as I usually would be by such a soft and submissive character! It took me a little longer to get in to rivals because Tony isn't as enjoyable for me to read and he opens the novel, but persevere, as it just gets better and better.

Velvetink says

Found my copy, read it ages ago, brought home to re-read sometime.

Louise says

I went on to read this after Riders as it shares many of the same characters. Again I loved the lack of regard for authority and rules. A romp through the trials of bidding for a tv network which is fantastically written. I cannot say this is a classic but it is really well written and Jilly's choice of language and phrasing is great. You think it's 'trash' until you read something written by someone without Jilly's skill and then you realise what a good writer she is.

Jean says

Reading the American version, which is titled Players.

Update: I wonder why they changed the title--Rivals was a much better title.

However, regardless of the title, a terrible book. An 80's corporate soap opera that's very dated. Characterization is terrible--I had to really concentrate to remember which one was Declan and which Rupert and which Tony (the women were a little better differentiated), but worst of all was the ridiculous inconsistency of them. My favorite was Cameron, the high-powered, bitchy, ambitious, American television producer. But when she temporarily loses her job and moves in with Rupert, she becomes someone who can shop and cook and cares deeply about the quality of her cooking. Makes no sense. The much vaunted "sexiness" also left me cold. Sure, lots of people are falling into bed with lots of other people, but the writing

surrounding those episodes is at best un-erotic and at worst positively risible. (Paraphrasing, here, because I don't have the book in front of me, but one particularly cringe-making description was something like "With him inside her, she felt like a lock that contained the Queen Mary 2.") There was the occasional amusing turn of phrase or word play, but not nearly enough to justify the rest of the tripe. I've had Jilly Cooper on my list to read for a long time. I think I can safely take her off, now.

TashNz says

I gave this 5 star purely for nostalgic reasons! My first Jilly Cooper book as an impressionable 20 year old and i remember my eyes almost popping out as i turned page after page - and I rate the rest that feature Rupert Campbell Black with his wife 5 star because they are still happily together :D

Amanda says

In some ways this is very much more of the same from Jilly Cooper as *Riders*, but in general Cooper has tightened up her act. The writing is more snappy and less rambling, the characters seem more vivid and certain of them are far more likeable than in her first book.

The plot this time involves a large franchise battle between Corinium - the incumbent television company, led by Tony Baddingham - and Venturer, formed by a number of larger than life characters who have had various run-ins with Tony and wish to see his downfall.

As well as being reintroduced to Rupert Campbell-Black - who is far more loveable rogue this time than unprincipled bastard - we also meet the O'Hara family, including the divine Taggie who is destined to play a huge part in Rupert's life. Taggie is one of my very favourite characters of Cooper's and her union with Rupert is sweet and genuine.

As mentioned, Cooper's plot is less convoluted. Here there is the definite focus of the franchise battle, which drives the plot forward. There are innumerable cases of bed-hopping and wife swapping as each consortium attempts to plunge the other into controversy before the big meeting with the IBA.

Of course, there is a naughty fairytale element to the story - nice things happen to nice people (Taggie and Rupert); those who are conflicted and difficult learn how to become better people (Cameron Cook); while the bad guys are ousted (Tony). There is one person who is irredeemable in my eyes, and this is Maud O'Hara - she is selfish and shows both lack of judgement and bitter jealousy.

I also found myself annoyed with the plot device of young, precocious girl (in *Riders*, Fen and here, Caitlin) - I sense that Cooper is attempting to build a youthful version of herself into each of her stories. Finally, Cooper has the tendency to use words such as 'screamed' and 'yelled' in terms of conversations, which becomes jarring after a while.

Overall, Cooper is not breaking the mould here at all but she writes a fantastic and gripping story.
