

In the Pink—Again

By Lesley Ward

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This weekend I did something I haven't done in a long time—I went out and jumped some cross country fences. I like to think of myself as an amateur eventer, but due to a variety of horse-related reasons, I've not jumped a solid, cross-country fence in about three years. Could I still do it? Would I remember how to jump something that didn't fall down? Who knows?

My young horse Tee is a five-year-old off-the-track Thoroughbred. He's a lovely little guy. If you read Horse Illustrated, you'll spot him as a regular model. We've been doing a bit of jumping this year. I've had several jumping lessons and popped him over a few fences at home. After a successful hunter show, I decided that it was time to see how we would do over some cross-country fences.

To get myself psyched up, I visited my local tack shop, Wise Choice Tack, and bought a brand-new pink crop. Pink used to be my cross-country color. I'm sure the staff at the tack shop thought I was buying it for an eight-year-old girl, not for myself.

Then I asked Holly, Horse Illustrated's senior associate editor, if she and her cross-country whiz kid, Zephyr, would baby sit Tee and I at the local horse park. She and I used to school and event together when I competed my much-loved old horse, Murphy. We are schooling compatible!

I was feeling nervous as we headed to the horse park. I gave Holly instructions on what to do if I fell off and got hurt—I have a farm and lots of animals—and ignored her as she rolled her eyes. Still, I tend to be a negative Nelly and I always expect the worse.

As I zipped up my Tipperary safety vest and picked up my new pink crop, I wondered if I still had it in me. I'm old. Did I still want to fly around cross-country courses--especially on a young horse?

As we cantered around to warm up, both horses were on their best behavior. I asked Holly if she would lead Tee and I over some starter level fences and off she went. We popped over a tiny log, some black railroad ties and a bright, white wall. Tee was great! Then on to a little coop and a stone wall. What a champ. He jumped them all at a canter and took them in stride. I was thrilled. I started to remember how much fun cross-country jumping was. We splashed through some water, jumped up and down a bank and popped over a couple of beginner novice height fences.

And you know what? I didn't have to use that pink crop once.

It was just enough to get me back in the game--I've entered a starter horse trial with Tee in August. I'd like to do one or two starters before we move up to beginner novice. Now it's time to dig out my pink eventing shirt and put it back to use. I'll let you know how we get on!

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