

Not Quite Right

By Lesley Ward

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Photo: Leslie PotterIt's always frustrating when a horse comes up slightly lame and there doesn't seem to be a cause for the lameness. My five-year-old Thoroughbred, Tee, hasn't been quite right for about a week and a half. I had signed up to do a dressage show two weeks ago and went with a friend to a local horse park to practice our tests in a proper arena.

Tee's green and extremely lazy and, if I'm going to be honest, schooling him on the flat isn't really my favorite activity. It wasn't long before I realized something wasn't right with him. As I rode him to the right he didn't want to trot. He seemed to want to skip into canter and avoid trotting completely.

Now, Tee is very one-sided. Trotting him to the right feels totally different than trotting him to the left. He seems much bouncier to the right. I'm not really sure why this is but I don't worry about it. At first, I thought he might be overreacting to my tiny Prince of Wales spurs, after all, I don't use them as often as I probably should on him.

I thought he was just being naughty and that he didn't want to work. Finally, I asked my riding pal to watch us and almost immediately she said, "He's lame."

Then I felt bad! Poor Tee. I thought he was just being lazy.

I hopped off and took him back to the trailer. Time to feel for lumps and bumps. There were none. In the past, if my horse Gracie was lame there always seemed to be a definite reason. A scrape here. A splint there. Tee has no suspicious lumps or bumps. My friend looked him over as well. No clues to the slight lameness.

I took him home and turned him out. Sometimes I think it's best to do as my English friends say: "Let 'Dr. Green' tend to your horse." This means toss your horse out in a field for a week or two and let the problem sort itself out. I'm not calling the vet yet.

Recently, one of my eventer friends had a prelim horse with slight lameness. He had a complete work up from her vet which resulted in no answers. She was told to keep him in for a few days then give him a few weeks off. Cost for the exam? More than \$700. The horse is sound again after a few weeks and was second in his last outing. It makes you think.

I lunged Tee a few days later and he appeared sound. When I got on him the next day he felt strange again. Now horsey friends are offering me advice. Maybe he's got a back problem. Call the chiropractor! Maybe it's a shoeing issue. Call the farrier!

Tee was due for new shoes this week so I asked the farrier to get out the hoof testers. He didn't spot any sore areas so I'm back to square one.

The little monkey gallops around the field happily and he looks sound at the walk. I'm going to give him a few more days off and then hop on again. Fingers crossed he'll be sound. I've owned him more than a year without a lame day, so I'm trying not to worry. I really don't want to have to call out the vet. Let's hope "Dr. Green" does the job.

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