

## Team Apollo News for 2012

I thought it was about time I updated 'Team Apollo' News following a disastrous 2011 when I was unable to put pen to paper, as terrible events unfolded, which almost saw the end of our 'Team'.

In brief, and so as not to dwell on 2011, our precious mare Apollo's State Secret was diagnosed by Dr Sue Dyson at the Animal Health Trust (AHT) as 'written off' as a loss of use case. Dr Dyson recommended that we don't ride her again. Devastating news considering she is still only 11 years of age, and the best horse I have ever sat on !!

We subsequently tried to put her in foal but this did not work and so she has retired to grass and we will try for a foal again this year.

Her retirement meant that she could not compete at the Badminton Grass Roots Finals in April 2011, and as I had spent the whole of 2010 trying to qualify and succeeding it was all very upsetting.

At the same time our young and very talented dressage horse Apollo's Salvadore was diagnosed, again by Dr Sue Dyson of the AHT, with kissing spines – a very severe case looking at the x-rays. At six years old and a gelding we made the very difficult decision to have him euthanised, to prevent anyone ever riding him again and causing him unnecessary pain and suffering. All this happened in the first four months of 2011 and left both Lewis and I deflated and struggling to find any motivation to carry on.

Eventually I decided to look for another horse and found a very handsome bay gelding via a friend of William Scott. After a full vetting and numerous xrays (I didn't want to make an expensive mistake) Teddy arrived and settled in straightaway.

As I didn't want to tempt fate once again, I decided not to change his name to an Apollo and so I competed him under his passported name of Rascin's Son Z. It quickly became evident that Teddy was going to be a rather 'challenging' ride !! To add insult to injury I seemed to be hitting the floor at a rather alarming rate, both whilst show jumping and riding cross country.

Having spent May – September trying to solve the mystery of the 'spinning horse, including trying to swim him every day, it became clear that this was more than just a behavioural issue. Sadly by the end of October he was almost unrideable, and as horses are rarely naughty for the sake of it I decided to make the long journey back to the AHT for Dr Sue Dyson to take a look – I'm sure she must think I have the worst luck ever, as this was my third horse in less than 12 months that she was being asked to look at.

Once again the news was not good – badly misshapen feet had led to ligament damage in both front feet following an MRI scan and Teddy was given six months off work and a reassessment date of April. More news of him in April but I am not holding out much hope of a miraculous recovery – feet are feet and generally do not change shape !!!

During 2011 I also decided to sell Apollo's Eye of the Tiger, as it was clear that he was going to be too careful for an event horse. Tiger was sold at the Stars of the Future auction held by Brightwells at Addington in August 2011. We think he is a star of the future and the lady who eventually bought him is very pleased with him – some good news at last !!

So this once again left me with no horse to ride and once again I toyed with the idea of giving up.

However at the end of October I was convinced by a friend to look at a five year old chestnut advertised on the British Eventing website. I actually didn't like the chestnut horse but stabled next to him, and also for sale, was an adorable four year old bay gelding called Archie – I had said on more than one occasion "no more four year olds" but rules are meant to be broken and so it was that Archie, show name 'Skip on Over' was purchased and arrived at MEC from his very quiet and calm yard to our very noisy, busy one .....

He got very stressed as he was born and bred on farm from where we bought him and I subsequently found him much more of a handful than when I went to try him. But with some help from my long suffering Instructor, he is now well on his way to being entered for his first competition.

As yet I have decided what that will be but now my pen (and word processor)are working again I will regularly update the Team Apollo page with his progress.

A picture will follow – WATCH THIS SPACE .....

At the beginning of December we decided to go on a 'jolly' to the Brightwells Stars of the Future Sale. On Thursday before the auction we looked at the Show-jumpers and Eventers and I had NO intention of buying another horse – really I didn't !!!

We had booked a VIP table for dinner at the Auction on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and I was a little bit excited as I had seen a lovely dark bay mare for sale called Blue Star, and I had watched her all day and I though she was just my type. To cut a long story short I bought her much to my other half's disgust.

So now I have two lovely horses for the 2012 season. Blue Star has only ever show jumped so we will need to see if she can cut it as an eventer !!



That brings me onto my two old boys.

Duke is now in his 25<sup>th</sup> year and doing well for the time of year. He plods on, let's hope he continues to do so into 2012.

Sadly Dan has been diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in his eye. He is on borrowed time at present and I will rely on the vet to tell me when enough is enough .

So roll on 2012, lets hope 'Skip on Over' and 'Blue Star' have a cracking year and that Team Apollo gets back on its feet.

I promise to keep these pages up to date this year – its my New Year's Resolution.