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Stem cell helps eventer return to his career

When Oingy Boingy, a talented 15-year-old thoroughbred event horse, damaged a tendon in 2005, his owner, Nicola Wilson, who runs an event yard in Milland, near Petersfield was heartbroken. Yet, following stem cell treatment, just two years later the pair finished second at the European Young Rider Eventing Championships at Blair Castle last year and have a full eventing campaign planned for this season.

In July 2005 the consistently successful advanced event horse, known as Harley at home, was in the middle of an impressive eventing season with his long term owner Nicola when he broke down after Bramham CCI*** having jumped double clear and finished 10th. Nicola, who has had the horse since he was a seven-year-old when she was just 14, was understandably devastated.

Nicola explains: "Harley is my number one horse. We had achieved so much together and had big plans. I was absolutely gutted when my vet confirmed that he had ruptured his near fore superficial digital flexor tendon. I thought it was the end."

Stuart Duncan BVMS Cert EP MRCVS, Harley's vet from the Liphook Equine Hospital in Hampshire, however, had other ideas. He recommended stem cell treatment and thankfully Nicola's insurance policy covered the cost of the procedure. Harley's treatment was then carried out by Jane Boswell at the hospital.

Harley underwent stem cell treatment immediately. Bone marrow, which is a rich source of stem cells, was extracted from his sternum while he was under sedation. In the laboratory the stem cells were isolated from the bone marrow and multiplied to in excess of ten million cells before being re-suspended in nutrient rich bone marrow supernatant. The cells were then injected into the site of the injury with the aim of promoting re-growth of the flexible tendon tissue rather than allowing less pliable and more injury-prone scar tissue to form.

Following this procedure Harley was placed on a strict regime of controlled exercise. Nicola recalls: “He wasn’t terribly cooperative during this phase of the proceedings. During our first canter he delivered a characteristically massive buck that sent me flying. We didn’t name him Oingy Boingy for nothing!” He returned to full work 18 months later, notching up a series of very creditable placings before pulling out the stops to win the individual silver medal at Blair Castle International in the Young Rider Europeans in August last year.

Jane Boswell said: “Harley had a large core lesion in the superficial digital flexor tendon which was diagnosed within days of injury and therefore he was an ideal candidate for stem cell treatment. Nicola was very careful and diligent with his rehabilitation programme. “

Nicola continues: “To be honest initially I was rather anxious about trying stem cell but felt I had nothing to lose because in my mind poor Harley was already a write off. I am so pleased that we went ahead with the treatment. His recovery has been incredible and his performance feels as good as ever. Last season was amazing and I am really looking forward to this year – starting with the South of England later this month. I would definitely use stem cell therapy again.”

Stem cell treatment is usually very straightforward and can be carried out at most of the UK’s leading equine veterinary practices as a routine veterinary procedure. Many equine insurance policies allow claims to be made for the treatment.

For further information on VetCell please telephone on +44 207 691 2062 or 866 764 0340, email: info@vetcell.com or visit the website at www.vetcell.com

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Image attached: **Please credit Alex Colqhoun**



Caption: *Oingy Boingy and Nicola Wilson in action at Blair Castle International in 2007*