



DI'S DAY OUT

I LOVE Hunter Paces! So much so that I run the AVTA one!

I used to do them whenever I had the chance but I have no transport and, for the last five years, have had one horse who is willing, energetic and enthusiastic, but at 29, would run himself into the ground, and one who is glamorous and gorgeous but such a maniac on the trails that I would come back from even a quiet hack with a dry mouth and heart palpitations!

Early this summer my “diva” found herself in a fancy jumper barn with wall-to-wall grooms and an Indoor the size of Rhode Island, blissfully happy in her chosen career as a show jumper. (Her chosen career, not mine!). In her place I have Sid, a 5 year old quarter horse. Green as grass and looking a total wreck when he arrived in May, he has become a trail and lesson horse extraordinaire! Unflappable, bombproof, a little lazy; he will never win a race but hey – my next birthday will say goodbye to my 50’s so lazy isn’t so bad! He is fit, muscled and learning to be someone’s horse rather than a face in the crowd.

So it was with great excitement that I accepted the offer of a ride to the AVH Pace on Sunday. My team-mates were Irvine Gaskin and her 10 year old daughter Emily. It was Em’s first pace and Sid’s too. It was a thrill to be out on a course again, and interesting to see how another organization runs a pace, marks trails etc. We had to take it quite slowly because of the soggy footing, but nevertheless enjoyed canters where possible. How many young horses will canter along in the rear of a group, on the buckle, one-handed? Sid was a megastar, and the highlight of the day was a last glorious exhilarating gallop up the side of the Hillsborough Country Club driveway! Unfortunately when we got to the top we realized we had missed a turn close to the beginning, and rather shamefacedly had to hack back down the hill in full view, find the turn, and do the last mile of the course. Still, it was worth the embarrassment!

We returned muddy, happy and ready to do the next pace. Thanks to our friends in the Amwell Valley Hounds for a great day. One of these days I WILL ride our own Pace!

