

## FIVE MINUTES WITH...

### Jodie Seddon

**■ Much like all horse-mad kids, I spent my teenage years trying to spend as little time as possible at school, so I could spend more time with my horses.**

"Eventing was my passion, and obtaining Mary King's autograph at Blenheim aged seven was a defining moment! I competed alongside academic and sporting commitments at school and university – but then reality hit. I had jumped my first three day events and intermediates, but my horse was becoming older and while I would have loved the opportunity to continue riding, a law conversion course beckoned with the promise of a sensible career.

"With it came London, then stints in South East Asia and regular commutes across Europe. I took the plunge and focussed on corporate legal work, where an ability to work

long hours whilst maintaining focus and attention to detail (honed from an early age while eventing) held me in good stead! I chose to step right away from the horses, so I could travel widely and focus on developing a career.

"As 30 approached, I became restless... and occasionally sneaked off at the weekends to sit on some poor unsuspecting borrowed horse. After about six months of this, and endless scrolling through for-sale adverts, we found *Umarite*. She too was slightly out of shape, but enthusiastic, and we snatched downtime in early mornings and weekends to channel our mutual enthusiasm

into some eventing again.

"Despite our many shortcomings, we had an absolute ball, placing regularly at BE100, winning at Novice, and placing at CCI2\*L and Intermediate – and so it started....

"I managed my legal career strategically, developing commercial experience at an in-house role, and then moving to a part-time senior role at the European arm of a US investment bank. This allowed me to broaden my skillset and sharpen my focus: for me, good legal advice must take into account the commercial circumstances, so a client is not left with conflicting priorities. It also allowed me more time to train and acquire another horse.

"In 2016 I took a step back from my legal career to focus on producing and competing in eventing and jumping at Stonehill Sport Horses. By that point, I was riding a number of horses up to 3\* level, and had bred my first foals from the

original mares I started competing again on. These two, *Umarite* and *Shenandoah Go Gin*, are still with us and breeding lovely foals each year. I joined GunnerCooke LLP initially to allow me to continue working with previous employers on an ad hoc basis, while I worked out how best to combine my equestrian and legal interests. "As I became more reintegrated within the equestrian world, it was clear to me that there was an absence of accessible, clear, commercial legal advice. Rather than being the last resort, the law can help and support riders, owners, trainers, sponsors, brands, organisers, vets, physios, breeders, and many more by structuring relationships effectively. A contract effectively is just a way of managing risk between two parties, nothing more.

"So – as well as stepping up to 4\* level eventing (including two trips round Blenheim!) and developing an international showjumping career, I have been working hard to grow an equine law practice. We are all senior lawyers with sector expertise, from contracts to disputes, property and regulatory matters. We also all have personal knowledge of the equine world, and can genuinely understand the context of equine-related issues. For me, it allows me to combine my legal skills with my extensive equine knowledge, as a rider, yard owner, breeder, employer and more."

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