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From what could have been a career-ending injury to a first grand prix win, Role Model has been a horse of a lifetime. Photo by Lili Weik

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A year ago I thought Taylor would never show again and this past weekend she and I won our first grand prix together.

It is a dream every young rider has; to win that first grand prix and finally feel that you have made it. For me, this was so much more than just winning a class, for many reasons, and it was a very emotional night. Role Model, or Taylor, has made so many of my dreams come true and this was only her second show back since hurting her knee a year ago when we thought her career as a show jumper had ended. This mare is truly a miracle horse; she just keeps proving everyone wrong and accomplishing more and more.

She has a heart bigger than the planet and she always tries her heart out for me. More than one year ago, in September 2013, she tripped jumping a small oxer at home and

chipped off eight pieces of her accessory carpal bone. Numerous veterinarians told us she was done and would be lucky to live out the rest of her years in the pasture relatively pain-free. However, we then found a surgeon who operated on her to remove the chips and said she should be able to come back to work. There were no guarantees though, and I said right after she got hurt that this horse does not owe me or anyone anything.

The St. Louis Horse Show, managed by Queenie Productions, was her third show back since she got hurt. When I walked the course for the \$25,000 1.50-meter grand prix on Jan. 11, I thought it was big, especially for an indoor and since she has not jumped a course since November because our indoor is small. It was definitely the biggest track she has jumped around, with big square oxers set right out of the corners. My only goal was to be double clear and for her to have a confident ride. Little did I know that a double clear would win the class!

Anybody who has seen Taylor in person knows she is a wild thing; she loves to show and when she is in the schooling ring she hates the sound of anyone hitting or dropping a pole. Well this weekend she was especially feeling her oats and I thought to myself in the schooling ring, "I don't know if I'm going to have control or brakes," because my arms were very sore—she was ready to go! I do show her in a loose ring snaffle, but I always have control in the ring and she knows when it is work time and I hate to over-bit.

When we got in the ring, she was all business and jumping great; she did not want to hit anything. When we

turned the corner to 8AB, a vertical-oxer one-stride I saw the forward distance in and I think she did not realize it was an oxer out because she put her back legs down in between the rails of the oxer and pulled them out quickly to jump it clean. I don't know how she did it; it was amazing. This was Taylor's first grand prix and I had no expectations. When we jumped the first round clean I was so overwhelmed at everything we have been through that I started crying. I was just so proud and grateful for this horse in my life.

We came back third out of four jump-off competitors and my sister and I made the decision to just be smart and clean as the first horse had a rail down and the second rider fell off, plus that was my plan all along. She did it again, she jumped great even when I buried her to the last oxer, and was clean again. It was then that time of torture waiting to see how the last horse did, but really I didn't care if I was first or second I was just thrilled to have gone double clean and for Taylor to be showing at all.

When I found out we won, it was an amazing end to our fairytale story. Two times in her life, vets have told us to put Taylor down and both times she has totally proven them wrong and done



*I couldn't quite believe we won!
Photo by Lili Weik*

more than most horses. I was the first person to sit on her and I have done all of the work riding her with help from others on the ground who have helped her to become what she is today.

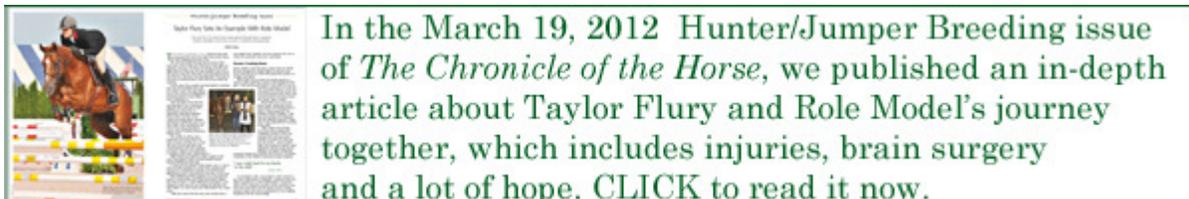
She is really the first horse I completely started and brought to where she is today and I always knew I would win my first grand prix on her, because she is just that special. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of our fairytale story and she will go on to do even bigger and better things. The sky is the limit for this horse as she is still quite young at only 9 years old.

When I walked out of the ring on her Saturday night, my first words were, "This mare is never for sale." Every time we have someone potentially looking at her something happens. She doesn't want to leave us.

What makes this horse so special is she a champion at whatever she does. A few weeks ago I took her on a trail ride, but I had to loan my sister my bridle so I took Taylor in a halter and lead rope bareback. How many people can ride their grand prix horses outside for the first time in two months bareback with a halter and lead rope?

Not only is Taylor starting her next phase in the show ring doing the grand prix classes but she is also starting her breeding career via embryo transfer. She had an amazing filly by Presley Boy last year that was sold in-utero to California. While it was heartbreaking for her first foal to be sold, again it was another story in her book as the lady who bought "Bunny" has turned into a second grandmother type to me.

Taylor's first colt by Cumano is due in two weeks and she has five more on the way after that, with three of the six already sold. I am so excited that I will finally have my own Taylor foal. When I would handle Bunny before she left to go to California I saw so much of Taylor in her, they had the same attitude and I cannot wait to see these foals in the show ring one day.



Taylor is my horse of a lifetime and I owe her everything for what she has done for me and the experiences and confidence she has given to me. We would not be here today without the special people in her life who have been there through her journey; my parents Janet and John, Nancy Whitehead, Alison Flury, Wendy Hofmeister, Joe Fargis, Candice King, Dr. Michael Ross, Dr. John Ruge (her surgeon), and so many more.

Chronicle blogger Taylor Flury rides out of her family's AliBoo Farm in Minooka, Ill., and competes primarily in the jumpers. She also runs AliBoo's breeding program. Flury's top mount is the U.S.-bred Role Model (Roc USA—Darling Devil), who claimed U.S. Equestrian Federation Horse of the Year titles in 2011 and 2012 in the 5- and 6-Year-Old Jumper divisions.

[Read all of Taylor's blogs here.](#) ^[1]

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