

Brynn Miller Races Beyond A Cystic Fibrosis Diagnosis At Devon

By **Ann Glavan**

Photo By **Jump Media LLC**

The first time Brynn Miller realized she was a bit different from an average elementary student was when her name kept getting called over the announcement system at school. It wasn't because Miller was a troublemaker—it was to take medicine for cystic fibrosis.

“The other kids weren't going to the office all the time or leaving recess early,” said Miller, 9. “And then I went to my friend's house, and I saw they didn't have the machine I have to use for my treatments in their house.”

Miller has been managing cystic fibrosis, a progressive and hereditary disease, since birth. It primarily affects the lungs and digestive system by producing abnormally thick mucus in the tissues. This can make it difficult to breathe, leaves Miller susceptible to respiratory infections, and makes it hard for her body to absorb nutrients and gain weight.

Something that's good for kids with cystic fibrosis? Exercise—and that's where riding comes in.

“Physical activity really helps, and thank God because she's a really active, high energy kid,” Joanne Meszoly, Miller's mother, said with a laugh. “I call her ‘Zilla’ more than I call her Brynn because she's a huge pain in the neck sometimes; she just runs around all over the place.”

Luckily Miller has lots of riding to keep her busy. The family lives on a small farm in Dickerson, Maryland, where Miller keeps Rocky Rocks, the pony she rides in Pony Club, hunts with the Potomac Hunt Club (Maryland) and races.

“I think foxhunting is my favorite. With show jumping I get really stressed out about messing something up and refusing, because it's a competition,” said Miller. “But foxhunting you just trust the horse, and you go fast, and it's all about having fun.”

After four seasons hunting with Potomac, Miller started racing with “Rocky,” both over fences and on the flat. She recently met Regina Welsh, U.S. Pony Racing's director and a trainer based in Baltimore, and Welsh helped coordinate a ride for Miller on Eliza Nichols' Olney



Brynn Miller jockeyed Olney Kushion to a fifth-placed finish in the WIHS Shetland Pony Steeplechase at the Devon Horse Show (Pa.).

Kushion for the Devon Shetland Pony Steeplechase at the Devon Horse Show in Pennsylvania on May 26. Miller flew around the Dixon Oval to a fifth-placed finish in the Division I section.

“I like racing because you get to go fast, and if you lose it's not all your fault—sometimes your horse just isn't that fast,” Miller said. “So it's not so stressful.”

If Miller's silks look familiar, it's thanks to Irvin “Skip” Crawford II, a renowned steeplechase owner and master of foxhounds for the Potomac Hunt. Crawford's horse Senior Senator won the Grand National timber race (Maryland) and the Maryland Hunt Cup for the third time this year, and Crawford loaned Miller the red-and-yellow silks jockey Eric Poretz has used on the gelding.

“Going to Devon was the most exciting thing because it was the day before my birthday, and I was in front of all these people, and I was racing around at a big event. I wasn't just watching it—I was in it,” Miller said. “I knew I wasn't going to get first place, but it was exciting, and it made me feel happy and excited and like I was special, and not just because I'm the kid that's sick. I'm the only kid in our area who races, and I was the kid in Senior Senator's silks.”

Racing may be Miller's newest passion, but the sport has quickly found its way into her future plans.

“I might not become a famous jockey or anything, but I want to teach other people how to race,” Miller said. “Because I may not be an awesome pony trainer, but I might be an awesome teacher, and I wouldn't have had this experience if someone hadn't taught me. I want to give other kids that chance.” 🐾