

# Jonathan Agnew



It has been quite a week for equestrianism, with the Olympic and world dressage champion Charlotte Dujardin deservedly winning the

prestigious Sportswoman of the Year award. Then a film of a certain BBC radio commentator being thrown from a runaway horse went viral to the extent that it was even shown on the television news in New Zealand. (If you have not seen it yet, a YouTube search for 'Jonathan Agnew riding lesson' will do the trick.)

Happily the bruises have now subsided and I have, literally, got back on the horse again. It was a timely lesson in just how powerful these wonderful animals are, and having seen the footage there are definitely some aspects of my technique that can be improved. Frantically yelling 'Whoa, Paddy!' as we thundered through the field at breakneck speed is not enough.

It has been a while since I tried a sport – or a new sport, at any rate. And, yes, I am hooked. To learn something from scratch at the age of 54 is a healthy challenge, and while I am not quite as keen on the mucking out as I might be, the thrill of rhythmically cantering along a hedgerow in the sunshine is something that simply must be experienced.

But the most important reminder for me from this incident is how sport

reflects life. I passionately believe, for example, that cricket is a brilliant education in resilience, with just you and your mate batting against 11 of the opposition. Can you muster the character to stand up for yourself in that hostile environment, or will you crumple? And, let's be honest, there can be no more graphic example of dusting yourself down from one of life's unexpected disappointments than the ruthless dumping I received

last week. Are you up for the challenge or not? That is the question sport constantly asks, and it's one that is entirely relevant to life in the outside world.

There is a fine line. It is surprising how many of the celebrities I've in-

terviewed on *Test Match Special* were put off playing cricket as kids because they were hit and hurt by the hard ball. If I am honest, had I broken an arm in my fall last week, I might not be quite so bullish now. But a successful sportsman learns from mistakes and misfortune, turning a negative experience into a positive. Just like life, sport was never supposed to be easy.

*'Sport reflects life – it was never supposed to be easy'*

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