

## Horseback Magazine June 2009

This month, I'd like to address the subject of personal training. My *real* success did not begin until the day I began to focus on my horsemanship skills. For quite awhile, I thought I was pretty good. I'd been winning a lot, and thought I knew everything I needed to know. After all, buckles don't lie! Then one day, Shorty Freeman pointed out to me, that I was not using my legs to do anything other than "kick". That really ticked me off. But... as usual, he was right.

Most people focus solely on the training of their horse without investing in their own development to compliment that horse. This is probably the biggest mistake I see people making, especially in the cutting industry. Too many people think all it takes to get them where they want to go is a really well bred, high caliber horse. Nine times out of ten, the only place that gets them is torpedoed into the dirt and maybe a trip to the hospital for x-rays. Rule number 1: A horse can only be as good as its rider. So, if you want to play the game and be competitive, you need to get yourself in training *in addition* to your horse. Cutting is a partnership game, your horse cannot babysit you and continue to overcome your mistakes forever. Over a period of time, if you keep making the same mistakes, you will end up "retraining" your horse to do undesirable things. It's very simple... become a capable partner, and you will have a successful program. In order to do this, it is crucial to find a trainer who is willing to work with you to help you attain your goals.

Our program is very unique in this industry and an excellent example of what I'm referring to. You can use this information as a model for your search. There are still some folks that can't get their heads around this concept, simply because it's never been done before. Our focus is on customer service and client development. Now that people understand the length and quality of time they get for their money, they appreciate our program enormously. Most professional trainers do a great job. However, based on the feedback that we have received over the years, a common theme always surfaces. Most trainers need their cattle to train their show horses on, and it is economically difficult to make enough cattle available to the amateur and non-pro client. *Our* cattle are used for the purpose of training clients. Here's a quick comparison of what we offer versus other programs that are available.

### **Current industry programs available to Amateurs and Non pros:**

15 - 20 minutes sessions

Working 1-3 head of cattle

Average cost : \$50.00

### **Challenges:**

- This program takes many months and years for riders to experience enough working time to develop and improve their riding.

-The resulting negativity impacts confidence due to the amount of time it takes to achieve success.

You simply cannot ride a cutting horse *once a week or less* and expect to get better, end of story. The vast majority of clients we work with get **most** of their “live cattle” cutting experience in the show pen. This type of program makes it hard to advance as a rider. Most people do not have access to live cattle any other way. Working the flag can be a very useful tool, however, it is still no substitute for live cattle.

### **Leon Harrel Training Center:**

Working directly with me, our clients receive 4 hours of training per day, cutting and working 20 or more head of cattle during that time. They receive one on one instruction consisting of lots of patience and **positive reinforcement**. Clients have the opportunity to ride 2 really good finished cutting horses – (former show horses) - throughout the day, which we provide. I also encourage clients to bring their own horse with them for me to evaluate and work with whenever possible. This helps me to assess their challenges, and create a training experience that will compliment their long term training program when they return home.

**Challenges:** -**Making the commitment** to your dreams and goals.

-**Making the time.** This means setting aside a few days out of your life to jumpstart your program.

For the price of one show weekend, riders learn more in three days in the program I’ve developed, than they do in a year or more with the alternatives currently available to them. When they complete one of our packages, (3 or 5 days of training) they leave equipped to go home and begin the pursuit of their dreams and goals. With the additional support and assistance of a good local trainer, our clients have gone on to become very successful.

In addition to our Day Training programs, we do something else here that is unique to the industry. Each horse we place with a new owner comes complete with a complimentary training package. We do this in order to ensure that the new “partnerships” get off to a great start. We offer the option of one of the following: our 3 day/4 night intensive training package (which includes room and board for riders), or our one month training package which allows you to leave your horse with us for 30 days, and ride at your convenience. The reason for all this... The success of our clients is *essential* to the success of our program.

Even though you won’t find this type of service anywhere else, this should give you a good guideline for the kind of personal attention necessary to accelerate your learning curve. There are many excellent trainers around the country who are more than willing to help you reach your goals. Take the time to find the one that’s right for you!

Until next time, cut clean, quit clean, and have a blast in the middle!