

“Horse Training and Time Management”

My Dad called earlier this week and this subject came up, Dad was asking me how everything was going and how the training horses were working. I was telling my Dad that in all the years I've been training horses I don't remember a time that I enjoyed it more than I do right now. His response to that was, "That's because you train so much smarter than you did years ago".

That conversation got me to thinking about the evolution of my program over the past 30 years and how my time management has improved a hundred fold since I first began this business. It all goes back to that old saying "There's no substitute for experience".

Because of the way my training program is structured today, I have a step by step process that I go thru with every horse I ride, whether it's one of our personal performance horses, or one of the training horses I have taken in from one of my customers. The way you arrive at a successful step by step program is learning which steps are unproductive and eliminating or adjusting those steps.

Everything you do in your training program should be a prerequisite to another step. There is a reason for everything I do in my program. We live in a busy busy world, and I know everybody out there is just like me, most days don't have enough hours in the day. I've always said that I wished God would've made the days 30 hours instead of 24, then I might've been able to get most everything done that I had planned for the day.

In one of the blogs I wrote earlier this year I talked a lot about helping the horse you are riding/training to reach its potential. The key here for me is to train each horse using a step by step process to maximize daily improvement with the least amount of time and effort. Now that doesn't mean work them fifteen minutes and call it good. Good habits are formed by correct repetitions, just as bad habits are formed by incorrect repetitions. Incorrect repetitions are a waste of time, they need to be eliminated from your program.

I have made my training program as simple as possible so my students can understand what they need to do and why. It consists of three levels of exercises and drills with level one being the foundation or building blocks to help that horse reach its potential.

Every training session starts and ends with the level one exercise. These are exercises that put an emphasis on controlling the horse's five body parts and keeping that horse soft and using the thinking side of its brain.

The level one exercises are prerequisites for the level two and level three exercises. The level one exercise is by far the most important. In my opinion if you do not have the level one exercises mastered with your horse there is no way that horse can ever reach its potential. I feel that strongly about that.

Every horse that I take in for continued training or a tune up has a level one exercise that it needs work with. After that is fixed they usually go right back to working like they once did.

Long story short, be sure you are working on the correct fundamental exercises and you will get the maximum improvement with the least amount of time and effort.

I will go into more detail on the three levels of exercises in my program in my next articles. Have a great one and safe riding.

Phil

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Phil Haugen and Rocking The Bakken.
A 2 year old Dash Ta Fame colt in for training last fall.