



YOU HEARD IT AT...

THE HIGHLINE



Hello Everyone!

It's early Saturday morning, 30 degrees and still dark outside. It feels like we have some cloud cover. Maybe more snow is on the way. Randy called Wes first thing this morning to bring the yearlings in just after our morning chores are finished. We're going to rope today until mid afternoon. This week has felt like a horsemanship boot-camp to me. Shayne and Randy have been working on fine-tuning our horsemanship skills, and I've been sharing every last little detail of how we share this way of life with you from meeting you on Sundays to how we teach you to ride our horses. It's been a terrific experience as we're able to teach, in one shot, to be all on the same page with our horsemanship and with you.

Shayne in his week home, has really been pushing us. It's still fun, but very intense. He's had us working on fine tuning our ground work, one rein stops, traveling straight, riding with a flag (we set our legs in position and if we don't get the response we'll use the flag; it really eliminates all the useless kicking and makes our leg cues mean something), disengaging hindquarters, moving the front around, walking, trotting, and loping with energy and accuracy, backing straight and in circles, all with softness, and changing the speed in each gait. We then added carrying and throwing a rope at a walk, trot, and lope. Let me tell you! There's some MAJOR COORDINATION going on there! Yesterday we took the bridles off completely and did all of our work with just a neck rope. I must say we actually did better with the neck rope (we're riding with about a 5 foot strand of rope around the base of the horse's neck). That tells us we're relying on our hands too much. Hmm. Easy and I are really struggling in some areas and doing really well in others. I was pretty bummed with myself yesterday, it seemed a couple of us were struggling. Boy this horsemanship is a journey! Shayne and Randy although firm with us and not quick to just throw out the compliments, were pretty reassuring that we are not alone in our frustrations.

You know, thinking about it all, I tended to think of my horse in an "overall" kind of way, for instance, he's hard all around (he didn't bend well or move his feet well). Now I'm starting to break it down into parts, rather than working on the whole picture at once. I know I've heard to make things simple, and work on one thing at a time. It's now making sense to me. Funny how our heads work!

One day this week we all just let go and had a game of football on horseback. We used an old plastic bleach jug with rocks in it that we use to desensitize the horses with. Three girls who threw like girls against four competitive guys, what a great afternoon that was! Amber made some great offside saddle catches, Wes too, Spencer's got a seven foot arm span and kept swatting down our "passes", Randy cheated all the time, Kathy rode hands in the air, no reins, standing in her stirrups to catch the ball, Shayne kept changing the rules, and I found a competitive side in me that I didn't know was there. What a hoot! We're all riding colts and not one got excited. Pretty neat.



Winter is going by rather quickly on us, and the big task of saddle cleaning came up. I got the kids started on them and they've got a great system going between the four of them. Pretty neat to see a normally tedious time consuming task, just get worked into the days like it's just another daily chore.

Next week I'm heading to Maui for the first time to see my daughter, Brianna. I'm really looking forward to seeing how she's coming along over there as she's riding for an outfit taking trail rides and riding horses for the public. This riding thing runs in the family! So the next Highline is going to be written from there. I'll be keeping up with what's going on at the ranch so will keep you up to date as usual. I'll be missing out on all the riding and roping they are going to do here, maybe Brianna can spare me a horse and a rope!

Have a great week everyone!

Dori

