

My first clinic with Craig
(and my seat training with Craig's student, Jules Mcinnes)

Before any knowledge of Craig's superb methods, i thought that i was doing the best that I could with my body, legs, hands etc to get the horse to respond (underlining the word 'get'). I've always been taught "give him a smack and LEGS LEGS LEGS!" and since having lessons with Jules and taking part in Craig's clinic I have been introduced to a completely new way of being when in the saddle. I've always believed in having a spiritual connection with a horse, when in the saddle or on the ground but I've never had the chance to explore this partnership without the use of force and ending up with sweat running down my forehead under my hat! But now I've got this incredible opportunity to begin my dream of making the rider-horse partnership a wonderful thing and hoping that in the future more riders and owners of horses will be incredibly grateful to have a beautiful and loyal being in their lives. I don't own a horse of my own but i believe that the universe will choose the time and the horse for me one day, but before this time I've been able to do many many things and ride many many horses, it also will open up even more chances for me in future.

My first seat training session with Jules has shocked me to no end, only because i thought my position couldn't be compromised, say if the horse spooked and span round, i would have originally believed I was in the most secure position possible. However, from just sitting in the saddle at a walk doing exercises such as 'bicycle legs and reaching up to push the sky away' I've come to realise that my bottom half needed to have quite a lot of stretching and 'tweaking' as Jules would put it, for me to be even close to a secure and safe position. Being safe in the saddle is Jules' most essential lesson and she can't stress enough how important it is to be adaptable to the horse's 'sudden' movements e.g. spooking at a plastic bag. As I continue my lessons with Jules i can feel myself become more supple and my legs become longer I am having such fun but i also love being challenged and Jules keeps coming up with goals for me to achieve, which constantly keeps my brain on the go.

On the first day of Craig's clinic I rode Billy a big black cob mare, who was nervous at first, from being on her own in the indoor school. So when i got onboard Craig took control and I sat there, watching his every move (even though this was very difficult for me to see!) he did some in hand work with Billy encouraging her to relax and breathe out as it became obvious that she was holding her breath, I thought for a second that she might of passed out with me onboard! But as Craig continued his magic she showed agreed by giving this great big breath out. I remember Craig saying that if the horse wants to do something else, that's fine but it's important to compromise "make a deal" so that the horse is doing the task that was asked but within his/her 'side of the bargain'. The strange thing was that I thought I would be nervous, riding in front of strangers, but I surprised myself because as soon as i got on and Craig was talking to me it felt like it was just me and him in the arena and i ignored everyone else sitting there. I've had bad experiences of people criticising my riding(especially when in pony club rally's) but I just thought to myself I'm so incredibly lucky to be here right now and I couldn't stop myself from smiling throughout, even when Billy was performing some dance moves by spinning round Craig with some speed! My second session with Craig (my mum, sister and boyfriend watching) was fantastic. I wouldn't have thought in a million years that I would feel so happy with my riding just in walk. But I did, I felt that I connected with Billy and I completed shoulder-in movements in confident fashion, and when Craig said "you've got it!" i smiled so much and looked in Craig's direction I came off my line in the school which he said "keep going!!" I laughed and tried to complete it with what space I had left.

I just can't wait for Craig's next clinic!

Eve Cory
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