

Training with

DAVID NORBURY

Story: Anna Sherpley, Photos: Julie Wilson



David Norbury has been operating out of his Kinglake Training Stables for the past 30 years and in that time he has had great success in the show pen in a variety of disciplines; Western Pleasure, Western Horsemanship, Trail, Hunter Under Saddle and Reining. David is a six time winner of the Australian Halter Showcase Super Horse Event which comprises, Halter, Western Pleasure, Trail, Reining and Hunter Under Saddle, all ridden on the same horse. "Versatility is good for the horses," says David, "so it keeps them interested and it is good for the riders, as it keeps them interested as well." As well as the Super Horse, David has captured three Barstoc Horse of the Year titles, three Zyo NPHA Western Pleasure Futurities and an amazing and record breaking seven Zyo Trail Championships at the Australian Halter Showcase amongst his impressive list of awards. Horse Deals caught up with David and his successful rider and trainer daughter, Courtney, who is now part of the family business at their Kinglake property. With Courtney doing the riding David gave us a training lesson.

"The most important thing in training your horse is its mindset, its willingness to be trained and the first step is to achieve softness with your horse."

"Exceptional movement is a bonus, but a small percentage of horses are exceptional movers; most are average movers and that is OK, because you can train them to be successful. To do the work they are asked to do the horses have to be supple," says David, and that's where we begin.

Courtney is riding the five year old point mare, Who Whiz It that is training principally for reining, but she will be used for Western Riding and Trail as well. David asks Courtney to jog around in a 20m circle and ask for the mare's nose to bend around to the inside shoulder. Courtney is asked to use her outside leg to block the

quarters from going out. The idea is to get the mare to adopt the bend of the circle. This is done on both reins. Courtney then asks for counter bend on the circle, again blocking the quarters from swinging in with the leg. This is followed by leg yielding and controlling the quarters and controlling the shoulders; getting the back legs to cross over and then the front legs cross over. "It is all part of getting her supple, so she can begin working," says David. The bending exercises are repeated at the lope. "Drive her forward and don't let her drop in," encourages David. "We want to move the hips and the shoulders independently to get control of the whole body."



On the circle, Courtney bends the mare around the circle and blocks the quarters with her outside leg.



Suppleness is important and Courtney is pictured bending 'Who Whiz It'. "Horses don't have a bad mouth, but they do get stiff in the poll and in front of the wither and suppling exercises are important."



It is important to control both the shoulders and the quarters. Courtney is asking the mare to move away from her leg and cross her back legs.

In this picture, Courtney is asking the mare to cross her front legs. "Exercises are what gives your horse the ability to perform manoeuvres."





Courtney asks the mare to half pass to the right and you can see in this picture that the left hind leg is about to come through and under. This is an exercise in preparation for a lead change.

In this picture David puts pressure on the mare's nose. It's not a violent push, just steady pressure and when the mare submits and moves her head back, David takes away the pressure. A horse learns from this release of pressure.



"All the training I do on the horses is done on their backs and they must be responsive to my legs especially, my hands and my voice. The Quarter Horse is a breed of a horse that is mentally mature earlier than some other breeds, but training them takes as long as it takes. We had a horse here that took a year before it became a good show horse and the owners were gracious enough to take

“If you over train, you will cook them.”

the time and leave it with us. It is important to realise that you will speed up a horse's training by under training it. If the lesson is on stops and straight up I get three or four good stops, I will leave it at that and take the horse for a ride up the road. If you over train, you will cook them. A horse learns more from the release in pressure than they will from the increase in pressure.”

LEAD CHANGES

"Lead changes are very important in Western competition and we begin training for them by training the half pass. In the half pass, we want the hip to be in advance of the shoulder (unlike a dressage half pass). This is purely a training manoeuvre, because when we lope off to the right, we want the left hind leg well under the horse and heading right. People tend to stay too long in their comfort zone when training their horses and therefore never develop more advanced riding and training skills and exercises are what give your horse the ability to perform different manoeuvres."

When it came to demonstrate lead changes, Courtney hopped aboard the multi award winning, including three Super Horse titles, *Her Radical Two*.

"Lead changes are performed correctly when the hip moves over before the front end and the change is initiated from behind. If we are changing from the left lead to the right, moving the horse's hips to the right enables the left hind leg to come across under the horse. Then the left front leg and right hind leg move together and then the right front leg comes forward and assumes the lead leg position. It is easiest to do lead changes on horses that have a slow legged and elevated lope. The quality of a lope depart or a lead change depends on how the horse and rider get to it. The lead change lasts for one stride only,



"Her Radical Two is the essence of an all round horse." This is a beautiful picture of a lope. The horse is nicely looking through the bridle and his poll is level with his wither. He is carrying himself and clearly lifting in the lope.

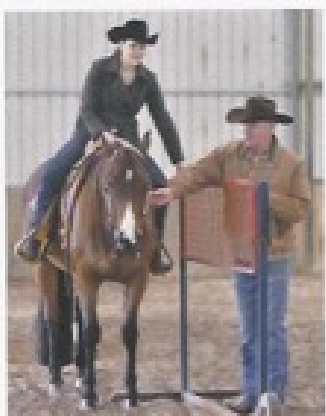
but it may take 200 to 300 strides in preparation to get that on correct stride. Counter center is a great exercise for improving the lope and they have to be real broke to do it well.

Courtney explains, "Anticipation can become an issue and is a serious fault in the show pen. With this horse, because he is so established, I don't practice

lead changes unless I am coming up to a major show, then I do just a few. I don't want him to anticipate, so I don't do changes when he anticipates. I set him up for them, then I don't ask, I go straight or come back to a jog. I use the anticipation as a tool. With young horses we want them to anticipate, then we back off. Trail horses will try and anticipate, even opening the gate

themselves. In our training we spend a lot of time doing nothing. Opening the gate, I don't even want him to look through it; he must wait for my aids."

David continues, "Any time you are pulling on a horse you are losing; any time you are pushing, you are winning. I am continually trying to find where my horses resist and that tells me how to progress my training. With the poles at the lope, I will always start with one and when the horse is comfortable, the harder I will make it. They release the pole patterns before the show and if necessary I will practice that pattern. "Really one of the most important things for both rider and horse to learn, is to wait."



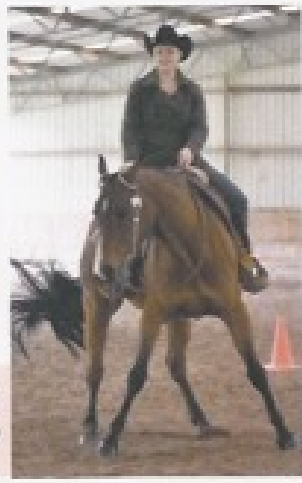
"I don't even let them look through the gate, they must wait for the aids."



The training gate does not just open and close, it swings 360 degrees, so if you need to you can keep going around. It is not always just a case of opening going through and closing, so to stop any anticipation, the rider can ask the horse to go around again.



Hez Radical Two is a great lead changer. In this picture he is in the second phase of a lead change from left to right. His left hind leg has come under to support the change and in this photo the right hind and left fore are coming through which will be followed by the right fore leg taking the lead.



He can spin like the best of them. Small circles are good training for teaching them to spin.



Hez Radical Two walks touch free through the poles.



"At the lope I will always start with one pole and then if the horse is comfortable I will add more poles."



Hez Radical Two performs well over a complicated series of poles and you can see from this picture that he is beautifully balanced, elevated and importantly watching the poles.