

What Your Horse Wants in a Rider

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What kind of rider is your horse looking for?

We talk a lot when shopping for horses about what type of horse we would like to have. Everything from age, size, temperament, and experience, but we never seem to reverse the thinking to talk about what kind of human the horse wants? In fact, we might well ask, “what lifestyle and program best suits this horse?”

People selling horses often say things like “oh, this horse wants a kid” or “he would like an older amateur to take care of”... but does he? Maybe it’s more important to him to have a quiet barn and get down to work when it’s time to ride?

In my experience horse-to-human match up is just as important as human dreams of the ideal horse. Take for instance a horse I had years ago called Charly. Charly had a somewhat judgmental way about him; he was very polite and mannerly, but I wouldn’t say friendly or excited to see me. In fact, he seemed to enjoy his alone time. I would have described him as business-like. That said, when we competed together I felt I could do no wrong, he was constant and unwavering in his job of teaching me,

he tidied up my mistakes and gave me confidence to reach for more.

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In contrast, another horse I had, Acaprio, was attuned and particularly friendly. All I had to do it seemed was think about him and he was at the gate! He could have spent all day being doted on and never was the least bit perturbed that he wasn't out in the field or snoozing or that I was dragging things out, for him time spent together was fun!

So when you think of these two different horses,



what home would suit them best? Surely Charly would not have wanted a kid to play with all day, and Acaprio would have lost his love for life if he'd been matched with someone who was all business.

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The same can be said in the riding program. Although business-like, Charly was not one to be drilled on. I think he found it redundant. If I repeated the same exercise over and over he never seemed to improve. If anything I think he was glaring back at me as if to say 'we have done this lady, move on.' In contrast Acaprio would have done a left shoulder in 1000x if I wanted. So I had to go into each training session with these things in mind each day. And if I'm honest at that point in my life I preferred Acaprio's style both in the barn and riding, I wanted to type A myself into oblivion. When I got on Charly I had to set limitations to my own personality and my expectations for the ride.

My point is when you go shopping for a new horse take a few minutes to explore the match from both sides. Notice the personality behind the talent. Being excited to work with your horse will draw you out to the barn to develop your skills. Having a good match will bring your horse's talents and personality to life too!



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