

# *Craig Cameron*

## **Double Horn Ranch—The Making of Great Horses & Horsemen**

### **THE BEST TEACHER**

As a working clinician traveling over 80,000 miles per year, starting 300 to 500 colts each one of those years, many people ask me, “Who taught you this, and who taught you that? Who was the best teacher or horseman you have ever met?” I have met and worked with many horsemen, some good and some bad. I have learned from each one of them. I learned what to do and what not to do. This is what horsemanship is, learning what to do and what not to do. As a matter of fact, if all you knew about horses was what not to do, you would be a darn good horseman because good horsemanship is what not to do.

However, the best teacher in the world of horses and horsemanship would have to be the horse. Who knows more about the horse than the horse? We must learn to listen and learn from the horse and never go into a training session thinking that we are better or smarter than the horse. Every horse would tell me what to do. He would tell me where he is good and where he is bad. He will tell me where he needs the help. Stop, look, listen; be more like the horse.

The horse is rarely in a rush or hurry mentally unless threatened or pushed. Learn to speak the horses’ language—watch his eyes, ears, tilt of the head, his expression, and body position, notice if he is licking his lips, or blinking his eyes for example. The gesturing, expressions, and the actions of the horse will tell you where he is at physically, mentally, and emotionally. I like to relate to the horse much of the time in the same manor as another horse would. I do not take the attitude that I never put myself above the horse (mentally); I am just another creature sharing time and space here on mother earth. I am asking something of the horse, he is really not asking anything of me but a good deal. I stepped into his world; he did not step into mine.

To be a great teacher, first you must be a great student. If you are into horses, never stop being a student of the horse. Our job is to learn to be effective in the way we relate to or train the horse. This should be a prerequisite and a responsibility. We must present things to a horse in a way he can understand them, give him the time it takes to understand. I will always give Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt credit for teaching me the power of working through understanding with horses. But every good horseman, whether it be Al Dunning, Bobby Ingersol, Bob Loomis, Monty Foreman, Buster Welch, Mark Chestnut of Texas, or many others, all would agree that the horse and old fashioned hard work and experience are the great teachers.

It’s kind of like fishing; you have to put your bait in the water. Experience is the best teacher and the most valuable resource you can have. Nobody can give it to you and you can not buy it; experience only comes from doing. Be willing to try and be willing to fail. Heck, it’s by your failures that you will find success. So, through your commonsense and your horse-sense, you knew the answer all along. Who is the best teacher when it comes to horse and horsemanship? The horse, of course!

*Ride Smart*