



Southern Cross Ranch Offers a Unique Two-year-old Training Program

by Jennifer Walker

A wealth of experience, a focus on personal care, and building a solid foundation on each horse: these are all factors that go into making Southern Cross Ranch a great place for training the current and future cutting horse stars.

Although Southern Cross Ranch has only been specializing in training two year olds for a few years, owners Andrew and Nicole Coates have been in the business for most of their lives. In fact, having been raised on a cattle ranch in Queensland, Australia, you could say that cutting is in Andrew's blood.

This life-long experience gives Andrew the ability to not only succeed in the show pen, but to train horses that go on to win with their owners and other trainers. At a young age Andrew was fortunate to spend some time starting colts with Ray Hunt. A few years later, he went to work for Graham Amos. After deciding to move to California, he went to work for Luke Bakey, and then finished his apprenticeship with Gary Gonsalves. He spent the next three years working for NFL Hall of Famer Joe Montana, where he earned numerous championships and made the finals at many major aged events. Coates struck out on his own in 2003. Since then, Coates has had earnings in excess of \$600,000 in the show pen. Even more impressive is the fact that in the last seven years, the horses Coates has trained as two year olds have gone on to win over a million dollars.

While Coates has seen success on cutting horses of all ages, in 2008 he and Nicole decided to focus their program on two-year-olds, putting a good foundation on these young horses that will carry them to a lifetime of success. "I wanted to offer something unique," Andrew explains. "After showing horses for several years, I wanted to use that experience

and focus only on training two-year-olds. In order to put the best foundation on them, you have to limit your time on the road. You need to be home, putting miles on those horses. There are no short cuts to training a two-year-old. You have to give them consistent training, show them plenty of cattle, and take care of them. Some will be superstars and some won't, but you still have to do your job and give each horse the right start and a good opportunity."

Although it was a difficult decision to give up the show career he has loved his whole life, starting a family with Nicole made that decision easier to make. Their son, Talon, is now a year old, and both Andrew and Nicole appreciate being home to spend time with him while focusing the business on training great horses. They do occasionally take their own horses to shows, but not showing outside horses means that if they need to stay home to keep a two-year-old on track, they can.

"Watching the horses I trained go on to do well for other people is really fulfilling," he says. "I enjoy it almost as much as if I were out there."

Some of these success stories include multiple aged event finalists and champions, along with two NCHA Non Pro Futurity Champions. In 2010, Nic the Wrangler (owned by Holy Cow Performance Horses), was the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity Open Intermediate Champion with Casey Branquinho, Calistoga Cat (owned by Don Parke), won the 3000 Novice World Championship with Gavin Jordan, and Im Catman (owned by Reata Cutting Horses), was NCHA Super Stakes Open Reserve Champion and Open Gelding Champion with Matt Budge.

"Every colt that I've ridden out of Andrew's program has been ready to roll," says Matt. "He puts a foundation on them that is easy to follow and they are not blown up. I call him every year when I'm

looking for a good one."

The program starts with looking at each horse from the ground up to see what it needs for optimum physical and mental health—all the way from proper hoof care to a feed and supplement program designed by an equine nutritionist to a superlative training program.

"Every horse is an individual," Coates explains. "He may have different dietary needs, he might be a little hot and be happier living outside rather than in a stall, or he might have an issue that requires putting him on Legend or Adequan early. Just because they're two-year-olds doesn't mean they don't need high quality care. We're asking them to do the same things the older horses do, maybe just not as hard and fast. Good, proactive, preventative care through the two year old year is crucial to keeping them sound during their show career. I want all the horses in our program looking and feeling their best. I want the owner to be proud of their horse and pleased with the service we provide, and this level of care and training will be reflected in the increasing value of the horse."

Southern Cross customer Steph Roven of Reata Cutting Horses comments, "Reata Cutting Horses could not be happier with the training that Andrew provided for our two year olds. The attention to care and detail that Southern Cross Ranch offers is first class, as is the finished product."

Another important aspect of the program is getting the horses out of the arena. Southern Cross Ranch backs up to 12,000 acres of land, and the access to miles of riding area and plenty of cattle gives the horses opportunities to get good exposure and experience.

"We like to get them outside and show them everyday ranch work—it makes them easier to train when they've had some miles outside," Andrew says. "Being a suc-

cessful performance horse starts with being a good riding horse. It helps to give them a job, whether it's taking them to a branding or riding them in the hills. It's beneficial for them mentally and physically to get out of the arena."

In addition to the miles of open spaces, the Southern Cross Ranch facility offers a 27 stall MD barn with safe turnouts, a 150x115 indoor arena, which allows training to continue even in inclement weather, and a 150x150 outdoor arena.

"From the first time I drove onto Southern Cross Ranch, I could see it was everything I'd been looking for in a training program," says Janine Schengel, a Southern Cross customer who has been in the industry for over 20 years. "It is a top notch facility where they are dedicated to quality care and training of the horses. It means a lot to me that they treat each horse as if it were their own."

The final piece in the success puzzle for Southern Cross Ranch is Andrew's wife, Nicole. She has been riding for over 20 years and fell in love with cutting early on, just like Andrew. She serves as the manager, overseeing the care of the horses, clients and ranch.

"I couldn't do it without her," Andrew says fondly. "She's the driving force behind what I do, and the program wouldn't be what it is without what she does."

The Coates' experience, their dedication to providing an individual program for each and every horse on the ranch, and their ability to create a balanced and solid foundation to make every horse a happy athlete that will perform to the best of its ability are all important aspects of what makes Southern Cross Ranch a unique program. For more information, visit their website at <http://southerncrossranchonline.com/index.htm>.

