

Look Ma, No Hands!

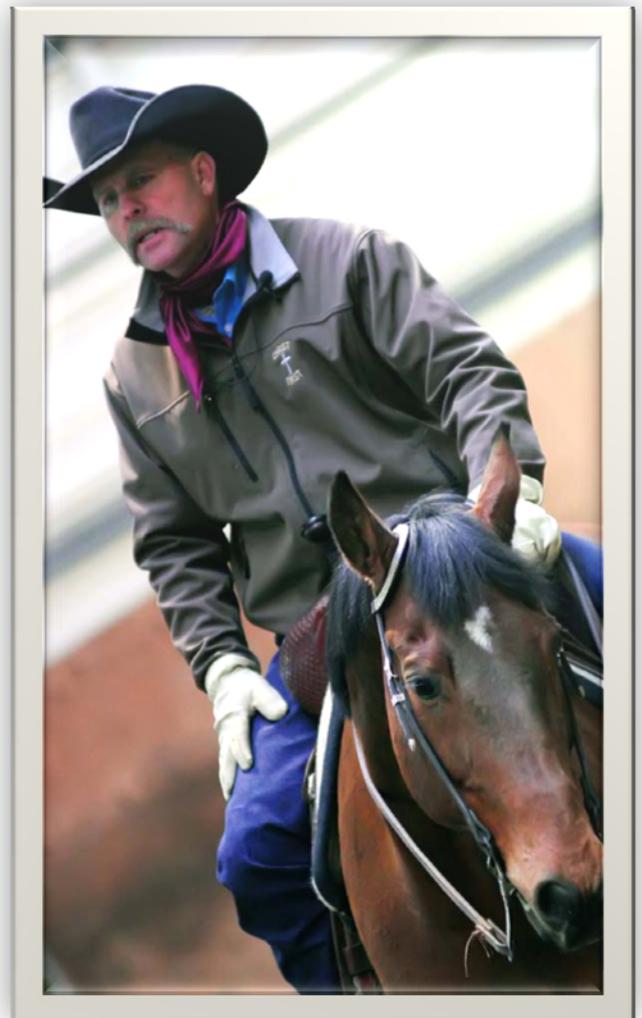
I know you've all heard it. People say it all the time, "Oh cutting, that's where the rider just sits there and does nothing." A finely tuned team of horse and rider, after years of hard work and training, coupled with a good shot of natural ability will develop a symbiotic relationship that presents, to the casual observer, the image of a horse doing everything on his own.

No one would ever say that a dressage rider just sits astride his horse and does nothing. Yet having had the opportunity to watch the "cream of the crop" compete in Kentucky at the World Equestrian Games, horse and rider are as one. Cues and aids are applied with the skill and fluidity that unless you are close enough to feel the heat radiating off the equine athlete, they are invisible to the naked eye.

Yikes, I can hear the groans already. But cutting, just like dressage, when done properly looks effortless, on the part of the rider. You know the duck scenario - calm and tranquil on the surface and little webbed feet going like crazy under the water line. Riding a cutting horse is all about using your feet.

The bare bone basics of cutting are simple - stop square and turn 180 degrees. Not 90 degrees. Not 200 degrees. And definitely not 360 degrees, that's an entirely different sport. All sounds simple doesn't it? The execution, on the other hand, is an wholly different matter.

Okay, how do you go about learning to do this properly? Well unfortunately we don't live in Texas where cattle outnumber people and there is a cutting horse trainer virtually on every corner. Clinics can provide a first-rate opportunity for the cutting horse rider to take advantage of top-notch instruction and experience total immersion into the sport, if even only for a short period of time.



Over the last couple of years the BCRCHA has developed an affinity with NCHA AAA judge and cutting horse trainer John Paul. Originally from Ellensburg, Washington, John has NCHA earnings of over \$100K and has trained horses and riders that can boast

NCHA futurity champions, Western National Champions and top 10 finalists on their resume. But it is John's ability to connect and communicate with people that is probably his greatest talent.



In 2010 John moved from central Washington and headed east to Kansas. No longer a 4 hour drive away it looked like clinics were now a thing of the past. But who would have thought that airfare into Seattle could be so reasonable? The Disney Cruise Line figured that one out earlier this year, but I digress. With a cheap flight booked, an arena secured and cattle rustled the BCRCHA put out the word, April 8 thru 10, 2011 there would be a John Paul Cutting Clinic. And people came, in droves. In fact a total of 21 people of all ages and abilities took part.

The participants were split into two groups, not by experience but simply by which time worked best. The first session was Friday and finished off Saturday morning, the second group picked up after lunch on Saturday and continued on throughout Sunday. One thing about John Paul, he never looks at a clock. Each and every participant gets his undivided attention for as long as it takes to get the job done.

As Sunday drew to a close there were lots of wet saddle pads, tired horses and smiles wider than a barn door. Plus one recurring comment – When is John coming back?

