

My Second Mustang **By Katie Vogel**

My love of mustangs began 15+ years ago when I bought 13.3hh Mexican Range Pony who was deemed nasty and not child proof. He and I kind of clicked from the first time I rode him. I bought him the second time I went out on him.

Denny had been a picador's pony in Mexico and had a hole in the side to prove it.

He was and still is awesome on the trail with a quirky sense of humor and a doglike loyalty to me.

Meanwhile I also had a PMU colt that I found in a kill pen in Canada. When I got him he was three months old and a mess.

I worked with and competed on Winston for many years but could not get him past his blind panic spooks and could not take him out on his own without major meltdowns. Winston is great on the ground and around people but a disaster mentally to ride. We have found that he is Insulin Resistant and so with his metabolic problems he is now semi-retired. With Denny not as sound as he used to be and no one to ride with, I decided I had room at home for one more. So started the search for the perfect trail horse . . . OK, I know there is no such thing. With Denny in mind I started looking at Mustangs. I didn't really want to start one from scratch but at the same time I didn't want something ancient.

I found Defazio in Maryland, a six year old titled Mustang who originated in Wyoming. (I understand he had been through the Extreme Mustang Makeover when first captured.)

I broke all the cardinal rules, went with gut instinct, and bought him sight-unseen. He and the first snowstorm of the winter arrived together, and so the bonding began.

Forget the two week trial; we had two feet of snow on the ground but something felt right about him despite the fact he dumped my daughter twice in fifteen minutes (we found he is incredibly sensitive). I just had to get past my spooking fears (eight years of riding Winston kinda jades you). Each time I took Fez out I got more and more comfortable with him. Then there was the first time he became really unsure of a large group of hunters – HE HID, went behind a tree, closed his eyes and wouldn't move. OK, this was different, but not unsafe. He, I found, is great in traffic, avoids closeness with other horses, and has a sense of silliness.

To really boost both our confidences I decided to do a two day mounted police despooring clinic. I had done two of these before with Bill Ritchie at Rosanne Vaccaro's Free Spirit Farm and found them to be mind altering with regard to confidence building.

Our boy was a star. He had no issues with each obstacle that was thrown our way, even walking through fire. Tarps, bridges, teeter-totters, he took in stride. Smoke and flares were looked at and dealt with.

I opted not to take part in the defensive riding part of the program at the end of the two day course. I did not want him pushed around so early in our relationship (I'd only had him for four months). But he has proved that the Mustang motto should be, "Mustangs take it in stride!" Enjoy the pictures and discover Mustangs like I have. If you trust them, they will trust you.

I must thank Robin and Michael for their help and support, and it's thanks to Michael that I have nicknamed Defazio "Fez" instead of "Fuzzy" (the horse thanks you too).

With regards,

Katie, Defazio, Denny, and Winston

See Photos Below.

