

Buying a Youngster – by Kelly Palmer

Derwentside Bullseye is my rising 4-y-o cob gelding who I have owned for a few months now. He is the most fantastic horse I have had and was, for me, my last chance with horses.



Kelly riding Bullseye for the first time

Buying my first horse

My first horse was a big 16.2hh bay TB x mare. We travelled a long way to see her and she was the first horse I saw. Yes, I made the novice mistake of buying the first I saw and didn't get her vetted. Cassie was a nightmare when I got her home. She was ill tempered, very dominant, she napped, reared and you could not hold your legs around her without her shooting off. It became clear that she had been doped. She had a few expensive accidents in the short period I owned her and we had some

challenging stand offs and arguments which included me being chucked off. Not

the ideal dream I had of my first horse! We eventually got to know each other and bonded. It was amazing! Her final accident was the end of her as she broke her leg beyond repair and sadly had to be put to sleep. I had owned her for an eventful six months.

Buying my second horse

I then got a wonderful Arab x gelding who yet again was the first one I viewed and didn't get him vetted. He was blind in one eye but was the most fabulous hack. He did have his own hang ups, issues with putting the bridle on, and, when riding on grass, he just wanted to gallop everywhere. I had him for two years until he spooked, reared up and fell over on his side and broke two ribs. I happened to mention to the vet that I was having a physiotherapist out for his back every two weeks for the last couple of months and he wanted to investigate. It turned out the poor horse was partially sighted in one eye, blind in the other and had slight kissings spines. I couldn't forgive myself for that horse being so honest and going through all that pain for me. He is now retired with a new owner and I couldn't have wished for a better home for him.

My first youngster

I then got my first youngster who was a 3-y-o Friesian x. He'd had a bridle and saddle on and was lunged and that was it. I wanted to bring on my own youngster as I didn't want to buy somebody else's problems. I felt confident in myself that I had enough knowledge and experience to bring him on, had great support around me and had done a ton of research. I bought him, trained him and he showed he had some real talent and would be wasted with me as just a happy hacker so was sold on to make a career for himself.

All my horses are the first ones I looked at and only tried by riding once. I never learned by my mistakes but they cost me dear. Please don't do the same as I did. Go back and try the horse again and never settle for "it will do". You will pay for it in the end, one way or another.

An Irish Sports pony

Then I did a favour for a friend of a friend who asked me look after her Irish sports pony who needed better grazing because at my yard the grass is wonderful. Yet again, I had another nightmare! He napped, reared and was always trying to run off. I had him checked all over and he was fine. He then got colic, the owner couldn't pay for surgery and nor could we. Luckily he was sorted out by other ways and ended up with me paying the vet's bill and the owner signing him over to me. I have to say I have never been so scared to ride a pony as I was with him. Even with all my experience, nothing I did worked with him and I ended up fearing for my life on some rides as he was very unpredictable, spooked all the time, jumped everywhere, tried to bolt, reared up and spun around. I ended up selling him to a more experienced, confident rider as, by this stage, I had lost mine completely.

The search for a cob began

So I decided I still wanted to be with horses. I always believe to be involved with horses is a passion and even though I had been through so much heartache and many problems, I didn't want to give up looking for the right one. This time it would have to be a nice calm, ploddy cob. I was looking for a kick along cob that the whole family could ride and who I could get my confidence back on. One that's been there, seen that, got the T-shirt - and if that didn't work out - I would hang up my hat for good as it would be obvious I was not meant to have horses.

I looked on the Internet mostly, for quite a while being very picky about what I was looking at. But the itch started ...hmmm, I wanted a horse again! I knew that feeling very well.



Sharing a carrot with Bullseye

I spotted an ad for a cob gelding, in my price range, just up the road. Now I'm going to be very honest about this, as bad as it sounds! I wasn't really interested in the horse as he looked like a Welsh Section D. Don't get me wrong, I like the breed but I just don't get on with them. I arranged to go and see this horse, I suppose like window shopping before I found the perfect one. I didn't even take a deposit with me (very unlike me) but I think it had started to sink in not to buy the first one you see.

An introduction to Bullseye

We arrived at the yard and yes I was nervous as I had such blow to my

confidence and hate people watching me ride, which is why I have never competed. We walked around the corner and my jaw hit the floor and I actually gasped as there was not this Welsh Section D staring back at me but a big, round cuddly cob.

We were introduced to him and he was very friendly. I asked a million questions about him and discovered he was rising four. Now, that was a problem for me because, while I had the experience, I did not have the confidence to take on a baby again. But we carried on with the viewing, having in mind he might not be for me.

He was tacked up and stood like a rock which very impressive. The owner then rode him and my mind was made up pretty much then that he was NOT for me as he was too forward going. I want to plod not charge around everywhere! But I thought it was only fair to try him. That was the best decision I have made with horses because it was as if I had hit the snooze button. He was not the forward going cob that the owner rode; he was a kick along cob. I felt so safe and so confident like we had been together for years and years. I even got my novice husband up on him as I was so sure that he wouldn't put a foot wrong. He didn't. I walked around with him and he just followed me. What made it even more impressive is that it was on a very windy day, like hold onto your hats kind of wind and it was pouring with rain and extremely cold as it was November. We were riding around a small field with trees and bushes thrashing around on three sides. He was not bothered one bit by it.

Once he was back in his stable, we chatted about him some more, what I had been through and what I was looking for, and without realizing it, I was standing directly behind him hugging his big bum. Now I don't recommend doing this with any horse especially a youngster but I just felt so safe with him and knew he wouldn't hurt me. The one thing I forgot to ask was a very simple one: what was his name? It was Bullseye.



[Bullseye is turning into a character](#)

Talking to others

I told the owner I would need to go away and think about it and had a few others to try and would ring him the following day. I spoke to various people who know me and my experience and what I had been through with my horses and how low my confidence was. Was it a good idea? Did I really want to bring on a baby again? Will he stay so calm and relaxed? I posted my dilemma on Horse and Pony Info asking for outsider advice and got a wonderful response. I wanted to be so sure and make

certain I was not kidding myself as this was my last chance. I took a very good friend of mine (what she doesn't know about horses is not worth knowing as she is an amazing horse woman) while my gut, head and heart all screamed he was the one for me but my confidence was saying 'No'.

She asked me a few questions:

"If he was older, would you buy him?"

I answered, "He would be in my stable now."

"Did you feel happy and safe on him?"

I said, "It was like riding an old school master and I must have done to put my husband on him."

The second viewing

I phoned the owner as promised and asked if I could come for another viewing and bring my knowledgeable friend with me. As soon as I saw the horse, I knew I would have him. I loved that horse so much already and my heart felt like bursting. We went through the same process and he was exactly the same as he was the first time I tried him. I sought the advice of my friend and she said he would be very good for me and she would help me every step of the way if I needed her. I left a deposit and agreed to buy him on the understanding that he passed a vetting, which he did, and he was delivered to me the next weekend.

Bullseye is the most wonderful horse I have had the pleasure of owning and I adore him with every ounce of my being. He is so sensible most of the time it is easily forgotten that he is still so young. Yes, he does still have baby moments but is never nasty. We read each other very well and when he tells me things I listen and he does the same. We still have a long way to go but I'm looking forward to it. He has given me so much confidence and I'm taking things very slowly with him. I have even been talking about possibly competing him when he is older and that would be a huge step for me.

I learnt so much from my previous horses, reading hundreds of books and already bringing on a youngster that I am confident that we are going to be a great team together. I love the fact that you never stop learning with horses and I want to keep learning. I have a great support system around me if I do run into problems including my patient husband who helps me and is up the yard with me every day, my friends up the yard and my very good friend.

Bullseye has come along nicely so far, but he was already backed and ridden in traffic. He knew the basic aids so I haven't had to do much. He did have issues with his feet being picked up as it was not done regularly but is a peach to it to now. Apart from that, he is still the same cob I went to see on that very cold, wet day.

My plans for him this year are just to have fun and build on our bond, keep him happy and active, get him out to see the world, but everything will be done slowly and at his pace. I get a lot of information and ideas from Monty Roberts, Pat Parelli and Clinton Anderson. Next year will be more schooling and after that the world is our oyster.



Wrapped up for winter - Bullseye (right)

Buying and bringing on a youngster is not easy as it takes patience, experience, knowledge and understanding. Never be afraid to ask for advice or even get a professional to help. There are so many ruined horses out there that end up in the worst places or even with the meat man. So many too who are being rescued by sanctuaries. You really don't want to add to it. I enjoy bringing on youngsters and moulding them to how I like them. The only downside is that any problems or issues are my fault and I have created them! But it's not for everyone as it takes a lot of time and, in a fast track world, it's not

everybody's idea of fun.

My advice when buying a horse

- Be honest with yourself about your experience and if you are willing to put in a lot of time and effort.
- Don't rush into it, take your time and know what you are looking for in your perfect partner and stick to it. Cassie did give signs that she had some behaviour issues as when I tried her as she did nap a little but I guess with all the dope in her, she couldn't be bothered to argue. I was so excited about getting my first horse I made excuses for her. Don't do what I did! Don't make the excuses. Ask yourself why, or go and try again and see if they repeat the behaviour. Honestly, I don't know how that woman slept at night!
- Ask as many questions as you can think of, and try to phrase questions so they cannot give a yes or no answer so they have to explain it a bit more. If the horse is genuine, the owners will be more than happy to answer them and probably go into more detail.
- Always take somebody more experienced with you as they will have a critical eye where you do not. With all the excitement and things running through your mind, it's easy to overlook things. Listen to their opinion, be it good or bad. Trust your instincts if something doesn't seem right or if something sounds too good to be true.
- When I went looking for what turns out to be Bullseye, I had a list in my head or you can make a list of things and take it with you: What I wanted from the horse, height, build, breed, temperament, what I will and will not accept regarding vices. I will not have a rearing, nappy or spooky horse at all. Must be good to hack out alone and in company and in traffic. Can be green, must not weave, crib, wind suck or box walk. If you are not sure go away and maybe come back and view the horse again, try the horse at everything you want to do and if you're still not sure, leave it. There are plenty more fish in the sea and it's not worth the time, effort and heartache.
- Also always get a horse vetted. Bullseye was the only horse I have had where I can honestly say I knew we were right for each other and, even if for some reason I can never ride him again, he will be with me till the end of his days.

So there it is - how and why I got my beloved Bullseye and I'm so glad I did!

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