

I surprised my parents by being able to draw horses not only before I could talk but also before I'd ever seen one. We lived next to UWA and there were no horses for miles around. Mum and Dad did their best to support me with something they knew nothing about by taking me to riding lessons and camps at Broadacres, Springfield and Greylands RDA.

I started at these riding schools as a weekend working pupil at 11 or 12 and bought my first horse at 13- an 18 month old TB which I paid \$90 for. A very bad choice but it got me started as we sent that one to spell and I leased a cobby kind of 15hh bolter from a girl who was sick of getting hurt. I didn't really care and we got on fine. The deal was mum and dad paid for agistment and I bought my own gear. The stuff I bought didn't make the grade at pony club so we didn't last long there!

I moved on to working on a station in the Pilbara at 15 and was busy with that and working in shearing sheds until I got a ticket to England when I was 23.



I applied for a job there at a riding school/ livery yard but was seriously not as good as I thought I was- in fact they laughed. I did get taken on as a working pupil for £20/ week and all living expenses up to me. I worked pretty hard, in fact some days it took from 7am to 2pm to muck out 42 boxes on my own and the rest of the day exercising horses and teaching to end at 8pm. Then I'd get on my scooter in rain and snow to go and work at the local pub so I could eat. I did my BHS stages 1 to 3 there but I had a bad fall that stopped me doing my practical coaching exam which would have completed by BHSAI.

I flew home- thankfully not in a wheelchair as I thought I might be- and immediately took a coaching position at Broadacres and worked there for 2 years. This gave me a lot of coaching to do, an opportunity to

compete, my level O coaching cert and most of my EA level 1 personal skills, plus \$200/ week- woo hoo! I gained my EA level 1 in '97.

I went back to being a working pupil for a pittance again. I worked with Fiona John for 2 years for \$50/ week and this gave me my real competition start. I had always wanted to event and I got to ride a couple of good horses up to 2\* and part of why I went to Fiona was that I found the show jump section the hardest. After one year training with her eventing was forgotten in favour of show jumping. I'd always liked dressage and show jumping gave me the thrill of jumping combined with the precision of dressage. I found my passion! I ran my own stable and coaching business as much as I could for a few years but I was feeling stuck as how to go further. I booked into a clinic with Ian Silitch from the US and he turned my ideas on riding upside down in 3 days so I packed up my crap and followed him back to his place a couple of months later.



America was a whole new kettle of fish. I got laughed at a lot again, I learned to ride in jeans and had bloody knees for a long time until I stopped gripping, I learned how to manage stallions and how not to, I learned to hold the mane and pretend I was smiling while the horse underneath me turned into an alien and I did learn I could live on doritos

and salsa.

But wow, I got to experience the big league!! I didn't know there was that much money in the world. Some days I sat on more than \$US 1 M. I got to watch all the big names warming up and competing and I was in the ring with them while they're discussing what they're doing. I went back to America three more times and kept learning.

In 2000 I helped Sue and Rory Hovell set up Yalambi farm stud which taught me a lot about the breeding side of things and handling young stock.



I left them in 2003 and set up on my own at a place on Hardwick Rd in the Swan Valley. I rented there for 10 years with great facilities and many wonderful horses, students and trainees. I achieved my EA Level 2 jumping specialist certificates in 2010 amidst stress, tears and lots of fun too.

I was not really keen to aim for a Level 3 but I wanted to learn more about sport psychology and coaching so I hunted down Glenn Stewart who was the head coach of the Eagles at the time and he was kind



enough to mentor me for a year. I knew nothing about football, he knew nothing about horses but his approach to coaching meant the sport wasn't important, the way you coach is. It gave me so much insight in how and what to coach plus how to get the most out of the coaches I was working with.

I brought Michelle Strapp over to WA to coach and she brought with her a wealth of knowledge and wonderful guidance. I also got clinics with Martine Hanover from Germany in dressage combined with Marian Semones and Rachel Brennan to improve the way my horses worked and increase their strength.

I have been lucky enough to spend nearly every day of my life learning from horses and working doing something I love which is helping others achieve an understanding of their horses which makes for much happier riding regardless of level.



One of my proudest achievements!