

The Show that wasn't

We were all set to take six horses to the Breed Show this year. Richard Lüst and his Spanish rider Juan Miguel Riaza arrived from Spain half an hour after I received the phone call to say that the Show had been cancelled due to most of Gloucestershire being under water!

We started by trying to get over the shock of the cancelled show with a meal and several bottles of red wine - Spanish wine, of course! We kept hoping that the show committee would change their minds, but we watched the evening news and saw that most of Gloucestershire was under water, without power and without tap water.

Rather than waste the trip over Richard offered to give a training sessions to all of our horses and, I suspect, a training session for us was also on the cards!

We started with the stallion Zagal, who had look like this when we first bought him in Spain as a three year old.



And like this by the time he arrived in the UK, having spent almost a year at a yard in Spain being backed whilst we pursued our court case against a particular Spanish man to get his passport.



He looks like this after several years rehabilitation and we were still treating him carefully, probably having got into a bit of a 'kid gloves' habit. Well, Juanmi put an end to that as he cantered Zagal round and round in every decreasing circles. I was worried that Zag would be unsound the next day, but no! He was as sound as a bell and seriously up for some more of the same. That day we had drawn a bit of a crowd and by the end of it we were all being hoisted up, in turn, to sit 'al la grupa'. Zagal, like the true Spanish horse that he is, loved every moment!



The next horse to come in for some treatment was Harry. Harry had had issues with being a stallion and was given to serious bouts of the 'won'ts' until we removed the cause of the trouble - testosterone! Harry, who is the most balanced and agile horse I have come across had been cantering round the school in the prescribed British way, suddenly found that Juanmi was asking a lot more than we did. Can you do flying changes? Yes, look, perfectly - effortlessly! He was already jumping cavaletti, but how about a spread? No problem. "He just sorts himself out, as he is intelligent and so balanced".

Next on the agenda was a running up lesson for two yearling fillies,

two two year old fillies and a two year old colt. We had already done much of the groundwork, but Richard, handling the youngsters in a very quiet, gentle but authoritative way, just added that special 'Spanish' something, the respectful step by step attention to the handler.

The three year old colt, who was lungeing well in preparation for backing in the Autumn, got a couple of lessons in being mounted and walking a few steps with a rider.



I was pretty chuffed that our visitors from Spain did not think that our horses suffered too badly from "horse patting" and that they were obedient and keen to engage in the learning process. The horses all worked more intensely than they were used to doing with us and all of them rose to the challenge with enjoyment. I even decided to have a session on the lunge myself! I am happy to report that I am nearly as intelligent and easy to teach as our horses!



So, despite the cancellation of the show, we had a wonderful week with Richard and Juanmi, and although they have now returned to temperatures in the high 40's in Spain, we are enjoying the benefits of their visit. Thanks guys!