

UNTOUCHED TO UNDER SADDLE IN THIRTY DAYS:



THREE FRIENDS, FIVE ARABIANS AND ONE FOOL-PROOF METHOD

THE DAY after Christmas 2010, Alexandra North, Deborah Kalkowski and Rick Mayer waited in anticipation as the first of five Arabians stepped off an equine transport that had carried the horses from the eastern part of the country to California. The horses ranged in age from 3 to 6 years old, but all shared a similar background—until being loaded on the transport, they had been raised in large social groups, running on a 250-acre farm in Greenbrier County, West Virginia, virtually untouched.

UNCONQUERABLE SPIRIT

Standing with Deborah and Rick on that brisk December day, Alex couldn't help but feel the prickle of excitement at the journey that lay

ahead. With 42 years of horse experience, she had tried her hand at various equestrian events before discovering her true passion—endurance riding. When she went on her first endurance ride in 1993, she knew she'd found her calling, and has since dedicated herself to gaining the knowledge and experience necessary to compete in the sport at the Federation Equestre Internationale level—the highest level of equestrian competition in the world.

To date, Alex has completed The Tevis Cup (rated by Time Magazine as one of the top-10 endurance competitions in the world along with the Tour de France and the Iditarod), her horse won the War Mare American Endurance

Racing Council award in 2002 (at the end of the riding season, she and her mare traveled over 3,000 miles by truck and trailer, racing in six endurance races and winning five out of six races, all in the final 30 days), in 2003 she was on the United States Endurance Team that competed at the Pan American Championships, and was a selector for the US World Endurance Team for Malaysia in 2009 and the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky in 2010.

While that's certainly an impressive resume for any rider, it's even more so for Alex. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1995, Alex not only prepares herself and her horses to ride up to a hundred miles in grueling conditions, but does so while battling a disease that can attack her balance and strength, challenging her ability to communicate with her horses and stay in the saddle.

Alex isn't in the habit of letting anything stop her from pursuing her dreams, and she planned to use the same determination in the challenge that lay before her—working with her two relatively inexperienced friends to start their Arabian horses.

THREE FRIENDS, FIVE HORSES

Alex moved to the small foothill town of Groveland, California that sits 12 miles from Yosemite National Park four years ago, and joined the Country Mountain Riders to meet horsemen in the area.

"When Alex started attending our horse club meetings, and I learned more about what she did with her horses, I became interested in endurance riding," Deborah says.

Discovering horses as an adult, Deborah began riding six years ago, and at the time she met Alex, she and her husband Kevin owned two Paints and a Quarter Horse. With her mare, Ricky, Deborah participated in trail trials, gymkhanas, cattle drives, parades and teampenning clinics. "Ricky is a great all-around horse that loves to run, and when Alex invited me to ride with her 'at speed,' I knew Ricky and I had found our discipline," Deborah shares.

In November of 2010, Deborah and Ricky completed their first 30-mile endurance event. Although Ricky had the heart to

perform, Deborah says her limitations became apparent. "She didn't have consistently good recovery rates, and the training regimen became too much for her," she explains.

Alex, who buys endurance prospects, trains them and then sells them to clients all over the world, including to the United Arab Emirates, convinced Deborah that if she was serious about endurance riding, she'd need to consider getting a horse bred for the sport. At the time, Alex was looking for new prospects to train, and suggested she and Deborah visit Asgard Arabians in West Virginia—a farm she had bought and trained several horses from in the past.

"When I first started buying, training and selling endurance prospects, I took a vet with me, traveled for days and looked at over 60 horses and found nothing I was willing to pay money for. People just wouldn't tell the truth about what they had, and as a result, I wasted my time. By chance at a ride, I saw an Asgard-bred horse that had made its way to the West Coast. He was 5 at the time, over 15.2 hands, and man could he move. I wanted one!" Alex expresses.

Through research, she discovered that Asgard Arabians has been breeding world-class horses using Russian and French racing bloodlines for over 30 years, and had a reputation for producing champion endurance horses. The farm is run by Tom and Holly Sayvetz who raise their horses in the old French tradition of letting the horses run loose in

Alex lays a calming hand on Fyriga as the mare takes in her new home.





With desensitizing, Alex built the horses' confidence and trust, and kept herself safe.

the mountains, over tough terrain, in large pastures, experiencing all kinds of weather, to strengthen them until they're 3 years old.

"Tom has been a Clinton Anderson devotee for years and uses his efficient techniques for key, brief roundpen sessions before the young horses are sold. These horses have beautiful gaits, great feet and legs, superior athletic ability and incredible metabolic recovery," Alex explains. "Who wouldn't want to ride something like that for a hundred miles? Life is too short to ride a rough, choppy horse for miles and miles."

What sets Asgard Arabians apart from other breeding farms is Tom's ability to match horses to riders' abilities and goals, and his

unrelenting quest to breed the perfect athlete. "Tom is very familiar with each of his horses, so if you ask for a calm, quiet horse, that's exactly what you'll get. If you want a hotter, spicier horse, then that's also exactly what you'll get," Alex maintains.

When she and Deborah visited the farm in September 2010, during the World Equestrian Games, they decided to purchase five horses—three for Alex and two for Deborah. While Alex was no stranger to starting young horses, and chose Monnamie, a quiet mare, and Fyriga and Pantin, two 3-year-olds that were "hot with big motors," Deborah had never started a horse before. But that didn't mean she wasn't up to the challenge.

"I wanted to experience training a green horse and creating that special bond from the beginning. It was a big risk, since I had no prior knowledge of training a horse," Deborah says, and heard plenty from naysayers. "You know it's hard to train a horse." "Why would you want an Arab?" "You're crazy; I hope you know what you're in for," Deborah says, repeating the criticism she heard from others. "Those comments alone don't begin to describe how people felt; you had to hear the inflection in their voices to feel the full impact. To me, that was even more reason to take on the challenge."

Alex and Tom carefully helped Deborah select Rio and Mimy—a 3-year-old gelding and a 4-year-old mare, who had quiet, solid dispositions.

When Rick, Deborah's longtime family friend, learned of her venture with Alex, he became interested as well, even though he had no horse experience. Rick had recently moved in with Deborah and Kevin on their ranch, and within a couple of months, had cautiously gotten interested in the couple's horses. "Actually, I had a very acute phobia of horses, and would stay well clear of them at first," Rick confides, but after getting in the saddle, he realized his fear wasn't of falling off, but rather being with horses on the ground.

An avid outdoorsman, he enjoyed the few times Deborah had taken him trail riding and wanted to get more involved. After talking with Deborah, they decided Rick would be responsible for Rio's training. "I guess for

right or wrong, I figured if I could assist with the ground training, it would help me work through that fear,” he reasons. “What better way to confront my fear than to be face to face with a 3-year-old Arab in a roundpen?”

At the time, Rick had no clue what he was getting himself into. “Other than a breed of horse, I didn’t know what an Arab was. I was totally ignorant of all of the issues that could arise from this endeavor, as well as the stereotype of Arabian horses,” he explains. “From Rio’s age, breed, lack of any training and very limited human exposure, to my complete and total lack of knowledge and having a fear of horses, it would seem, as many people theorized, that this was a train wreck waiting to happen. I have to say that sometimes the light at the end of the tunnel is not the train coming to run you down, but a revelation. With the right mind set, expert help, motivation and determination, anything is indeed possible.”

TRUST IN THE METHOD

A year after competing at the Pan American Endurance Championships, Alex saw Clinton demonstrating at the Western States horse Expo in Sacramento, California. After a short conversation with the clinician, she began studying the Method, using it to start her horses, and hasn’t looked back.

“The best part of the Method for me is how quickly I get results with any personality of horse—disrespectful, lazy or over reactive,” she says. An accountant by trade, Alex has a systematic mindset and appreciates Clinton’s step-by-step approach with clearly established training goals. “I’m very goal oriented and watching the DVDs showing Mindy

performing a particular exercise correctly gives me a target to aim for. It’s not always easy, and sometimes I’m sweating as much as the horse by the end of the lesson, but it has always been worth the effort,” she says.

Her goal from the start was to find a program that she could use repeatedly to get her endurance horses using the thinking side of their brains before adding speed work. “Getting the horses fit is the easy part. Controlling them once they’re fit enough to canter a hundred miles and keeping them sane at the start of a ride with 20 to 80 other horses losing their minds, is much more difficult. It’s useless and dangerous to create a Ferrari if it has no controls,” she explains. “The Method, and in particular the Fundamentals, makes my horses look like stars when I’m just following Clinton’s well-thought-out program. There’s nothing more satisfying then being at the start of an endurance ride with other competitors’ horses not standing still for mounting and tramping about, while my horse just stands there patiently, ready for the start, without wasting precious energy.”

But Alex can sympathize with those who deal with such behavior before races because she used to be the one riding the ill-tempered horse. “Now, my horses can go out in the front group with all the stressed out horses, and if I say walk, they walk. If I say canter on a loose

“WITH THE RIGHT MINDSET, EXPERT HELP, MOTIVATION AND DETERMINATION, ANYTHING IS INDEED POSSIBLE.”



Through consistent practice and good preparation, Fyriga and Mona calmly accepted a surcingle and buoys.



Alex, Deborah and Rick didn't confine their training sessions to the arena. They worked with the Arabians outdoors and over obstacles. Left: Alex works with Mona. Below: Rick guides Rio on the ground.

rein, then they do that too," she says. "It's a very powerful feeling."

Over the years, Alex has been able to use the Method to "fix" problem horses. "People often want a quick fix, a drill that will make a specific problem go away," she says. "When really, it's just as Clinton says; if you can get the disrespect or fear to go away, the other bad symptoms the horse has developed just dissolve."

Because of her experience and use of the Method to start her horses, Alex says she has developed a reputation for delivering safe, calm, fast endurance horses. "I have a waiting list of people wanting to buy my horses because there are so few trainers out there that do a quality job of training Arabians, especially for endurance. My motto for my horses is, 'Calm when you need it, speed when you want it,'" Alex shares.

So when she met Deborah, and later Rick, Alex was more than willing to share her knowledge, and she knew she could trust the Method to not only help them train respectful horses, but to keep everyone safe doing it. In fact, the three friends went together to purchase the Fundamentals series before the horses arrived.

"I lived and breathed Clinton for months. Before the Arabs arrived, I watched the videos on my laptop, and then I practiced the exercises with Ricky. My attitude, demeanor,

and how I related to my horse changed from the very first DVD," Deborah acknowledges.

Rick too studied the Method and knew besides Alex and Deborah, the Fundamentals series would be his only guideline when working with Rio. "I had no previous experience to fall back on. I had no training, no frame of reference, and no one to sit and watch my every move. Although I had people to go to with questions, the lion's share of my training time would be spent one-on-one with Rio, with only Clinton Anderson's DVDs to use as my basis for his training," Rick explains.

TRAINING COMMENCES

While Alex, Deborah and Rick each individually worked with their horses, on a regular basis they got together to discuss their training progress and challenges that arose, and every so often Deborah and Rick would haul their horses to Alex's ranch and vice versa, so that they could all work together and the horses could get used to strange environments. From the time the horses arrived until they received their first ride, a mere 30 days had passed. The three friends started the horses under saddle together, on the same day, one after the other. They followed Clinton's advice of using a helper and were sure to canter each of the horses on the first ride.

"I let both Rick and Deborah know that if they didn't feel comfortable, I would ride the horses the first time," Alex says, "but they both wanted to do it themselves and did a great job." From that day on, the Arabians were



“MY MOTTO FOR MY HORSES IS ‘CALM WHEN YOU NEED IT, SPEED WHEN YOU WANT IT.’”

ridden consistently and were being worked outside the confines of an arena in a short amount of time, with the levelheadedness of well-schooled horses.

ALEX'S PROGRESS:

The Horses:

Monnamie - A 6-year-old mare, Mona arrived at Alex's ranch with a quiet, willing disposition. Alex notes that Mona had been at the bottom of the herd's pecking order and was initially very nervous when tied, worked or ridden alone.

Fyriga—A 3-year-old, reactive, quick mare with a big motor, Fyriga proved to be a challenge to catch. "You'd blink and she was gone," Alex says. "And on top of that, she kicked like an Iraqi missile."

Pantin—A 3-year-old gelding, Pantin was much like Fyriga – difficult to catch, had a big motor and was very reactive with a stubborn streak. Alex describes him as initially being aloof and immature.

Biggest Challenge:

"The winter weather really made working consistently with the horses challenging due to all the snow, rain and mud we received. Mine had to stay in the muddy arena until I could reliably catch each of them as I only have large pastures. This really made the initial groundwork physically tiring for me due to slipping and sliding in the slick footing while trying to maintain the proper body position in relation to the horse," Alex explains.

Best Ride:

Although several rides stand out, completing a trail trials event with Mona followed by a cattle drive, ranks at the top of Alex's list. "I did a 12-mile, five-hour cattle drive with Mona up in the high country and then rode the 12 miles home alone, in two hours, over rough, mountainous terrain, crossing two bridges spanning the roaring Tuolumne River," Alex says. "The Quarter Horses on the drive were worn out after just the drive and certainly wouldn't have been able to make it back home in the same amount of time as Mona without a trailer ride." Tackling the 12-mile ride home alone was a big deal for the mare, Alex explains, because she was initially a bundle



Envoye

WIN YOUR OWN ARABIAN STARTED IN THE METHOD

Alex has long been an ambassador for endurance riding, a sport she's dedicated her life to, and this spring, she will host an FEI sanctioned endurance event to help promote the sport. Christened the Yosemite Gold Cup, the event will hold 25, 50, 75 and 100-mile races. Unlike most US endurance rides, Alex's event will offer a purse. "In my sport, you typically ride a 100 miles for a coffee cup or t-shirt, which makes it difficult for people to get sponsorships to get on the US Team," Alex says.

In order to not only offer a cash prize, but a world-class venue for the race and required personnel such as veterinarians, Alex is raffling off an Arabian trained in the Fundamentals to raise proceeds to put the event on. Working closely with Tom Asgard, the breeder she gets her sought-after endurance prospects from, Alex was given Envoye, an Arabian with impeccable breeding, conformation, temperament and athletic ability for the raffle. To sweeten the deal, Envoye spent months at the Downunder Horsemanship Ranch receiving training in the Fundamentals level of the Method from Clinton's Academy students.

"Tom is one of the most respected breeders of these horses, and has selected one of his best horses for the raffle. Combined with the training the horse will receive, this gelding is going to be quite the catch," Alex acknowledges.

The winner of the raffle will not only become the owner of an elite athlete with world-class bloodlines, but receive an entire day's lesson with Envoye at the Downunder Horsemanship Ranch from one of Clinton's Academy students.

"By no means will Envoye be suited just for endurance riding; the horses that come out of Asgard's are extremely athletic and levelheaded horses that would excel in almost any sport," Alex shares. "Really, the best part of the Method is that it puts a foundation in place and acts as a springboard into any discipline."

To enter for your chance to win Envoye, visit Alex's website www.yosemitgoldcup.com.



Just months after arriving in California, Mona excelled at her first 25-mile ride with Holly Corcoran—a rider she was unfamiliar with at the start of the ride.

of nerves when she was first ridden out by herself.

A Better Horseman:

“With each horse I train, I learn something new and grow as a horseman,” Alex expresses. “That’s why I’m actively getting hotter horses from Asgard. The challenge this type of horse presents, only makes me better with each obstacle the horse and I overcome. The horses are all individuals, and I’ve learned to search for what makes them comfortable initially so I can get my hands on them.”

DEBORAH’S PROGRESS:

The Horse:

Mimyque – A 4-year-old mare with a calm demeanor, Mimy turned out to be the perfect match for Deborah. “Tom described Mimy as being a bit shy and I found this to be the case,” Deborah shares, “but as long as I approached her with quiet confidence she was receptive and even a bit loving.”

Quick Progress:

“Alex made it clear to us from the beginning that she would assist us whenever we needed. As it turned out, Rick and I made great progress on our own; he working with Rio and I working with Mimy,” Deborah says. Two weeks into the program, she and Rick hauled the horses to Alex’s ranch. “We couldn’t believe we were trailering them after only two weeks,” Deborah admits. “So often we hear about people not being able to travel with their horses because they won’t get in a trailer, and here we newbies just loaded up and went.”

Greatest Accomplishment:

“Starting my own horse and developing a relationship with her has been priceless,” Deborah professes. “Being able to ride a green horse within 30 days at a walk, trot and canter with Clinton’s help has been amazing.”

RICK’S PROGRESS:

The Horse:

Epatant – To get a feel for Rio’s personality, Rick says to think of movie characters like “Dude” from the *Big Lebowski* or “Spicoli” from *Fast Times at Ridgmont High*. “When I see Rio I can just hear him saying, ‘All I need are some tasty waves, a cool buzz and I’m fine,’” Rick shares. “He’s mellow, friendly

and takes to things with a ‘That’s cool, no worries’ attitude.”

Biggest Challenge:

Rick’s goal was to train Rio to be a competent, well-rounded and well-behaved trail horse. “That turned out to be the easy part,” he says. “Training myself has proven to be the harder part, and I’m constantly playing catch up to my horse.” While Rio grasps the lessons quickly, Rick says he’s often running back to his DVD player, watching lessons over and over to make sure he is getting them right. “For me the DVD lessons have been easy to follow and simple to understand,” Rick says. “For Rio, the sky’s the limit. His only problem is that he’s got to train me at the same time he’s learning. So, he’s often pulling double duty.”

Best Accomplishment:

In the short time he’s been working with him, Rick says Rio has become a great mountain horse. “He is calm, and will climb, or descend, anything. Watching the DVDs



INSPIRATION

and performing all the exercises in the Fundamentals series has transformed Rio into a horse I feel very comfortable on,” he notes. “I especially admire his patience. He deals with my mistakes in the saddle and on the ground with just an odd roll of the eye. I look forward to teaching him more advanced techniques while I still muddle through the basics.”

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Eleven months after the Arabians arrived, Alex can’t help but look back on what she and her friends have accomplished and feel proud of both horses and humans. Within 30 days, all three were on their horses, even Rick, who had no previous horse experience. “That’s a testament to how well Clinton’s Method works,” Alex acknowledges. She has even watched Mona successfully complete several endurance rides with different riders.

So far Mona has completed two 25-mile events with a rider from Pennsylvania, and a three-day, 155-mile event with a German rider now living in Oakland, California. Mona handled each ride without a hitch, finishing calmly and efficiently carrying the new riders from start to finish and having unfamiliar vets closely inspecting her.

Alex’s mare isn’t the only horse of the five Arabians to have competed in an endurance ride. Just this past August, Deborah tackled the Eastern High Sierra endurance ride

Rick works diligently on becoming a well-rounded horseman and says the sky’s the limit for what Rio can accomplish.

Though an unlikely pairing due to their inexperience, Rick and Rio have defied the odds thanks to Alex’s guidance and the Method.

in Bridgeport, California on Mimy with resounding success. Then they entered the Lake Sonoma ride in November and achieved the same result.

“I knew Mimy was physically ready for the rides, but was this young horse ready for the mental challenge of riding all day with lots of unfamiliar horses in front and behind her?” Deborah remembers asking herself before the events. But it turns out she had nothing to worry about.

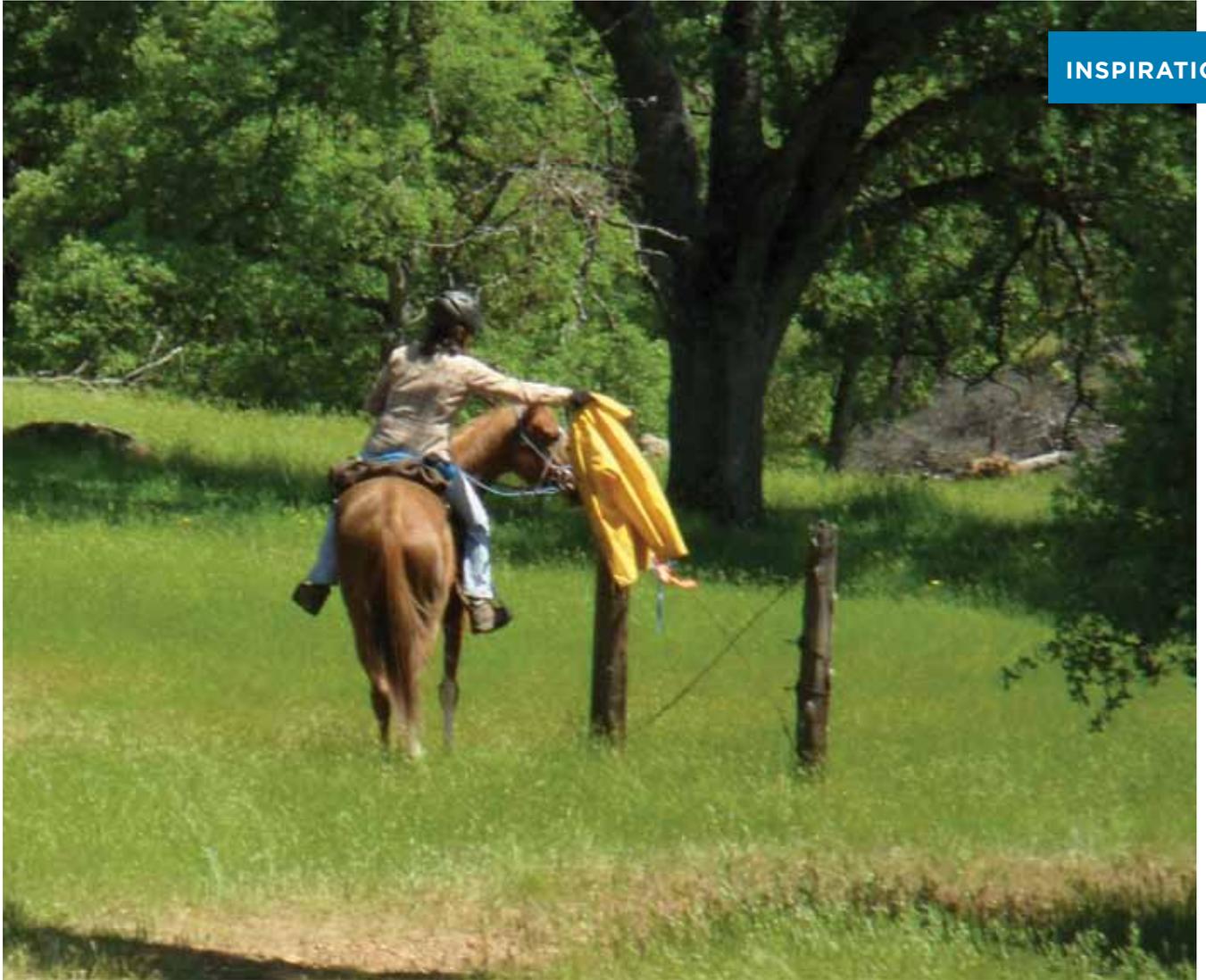
“Mimy’s demeanor was exceptional—it was apparent she was using the thinking side of her brain,” Deborah shares. “Some of the terrain was rocky and slow, but Mimy never gave up over the 25-mile events. We achieved

our goal of completing the rides, ending in 13th place and 7th place respectively out of over 25 riders in each event!”

While Rick hasn’t taken Rio on an endurance ride (yet), because he’s too young, he continues to progress with Rio and take on more challenges. “Clinton’s Fundamentals series allowed me to meet my goal of training a great trail horse. Possible endurance rides, or other adventures with Rio will be icing on the cake,” he affirms, and that’s a sentiment both Alex and Deborah agree with. Because one thing’s for certain, in Groveland, California, there are five Arabians and three horsemen who have a world of possibilities before them.



Mimy was a bit shy when she first arrived at Deborah’s, but with time and progression through the Method, the mare soon developed a quiet confidence in her new owner.



Top: When the Arabians were taken outside, they rode with the same levelheadedness of a well-schooled horse. Bottom left: The three friends and their Arabians pictured on their first group ride. Bottom right: "Being able to ride a green horse at the walk, trot and canter within 30 days has been amazing," Deborah says, shown here flexing Mimy.