

Breaking the Rules

By Ty Evans

Photo credit Skye Evans (pictured is Ty and Lariat riding in Utah)



I recently had a good friend of mine on my podcast “Everyday Mulemanship” with Ty Evans. His name is Jimmy Huggard, and I have known him most of my life. On this podcast episode we talked all about riding, driving, and packing. Of course, while sharing stories about mules and horses its inevitable that tales of wrecks and wild rides will come up. As Jim and I talked he made a comment, he said, “Every wreck I have ever been in has been because I broke a rule.” This is so correct. As I think back on most all of my mishaps, I can think of something I did wrong in that experience or some rule I broke. I will let you listen to the podcast to hear Jim’s stories but I will share one of my most recent experiences of rule breaking.

This past September (2020) I was in New Berlin, New York. We were there to teach a clinic; however, my family and I had arrived a couple days early so we took advan-

tage of the local riding trails. The fall colors were beautiful and the air was crisp. Perfect riding weather if you ask me. My daughters were anxious to get going and I myself am always eager to ride new country. On this particular day I chose to ride a three-year old colt I had just started named “Lariat”. She had been doing well so I felt good about riding her out with my family that day. However, as I saddled up Lariat, I noticed she was a bit humped-backed, and a little tighter through the body than normal. I excused it as a chilly fall morning symptom, and didn’t worry much about it. But as I led her away from the trailer, I really started to see just how tight she was, and amped up and nervous to boot. Well, I took just a moment to do a few moves on my groundwork checklist before stepping on. But looking back, I didn’t do enough. As we began to head down the trail, Lariat was worried and tight about everything. We got

about a half-mile down the trail when my daughters wanted to stop for a second and take a drink of water. Well, just as quick as my daughter Ellie crinkled that bottle, Lariat blew a gasket! She lit it up and went to bucking. All I could think about was, “please don’t run my kids over”. I yelled at them to get out of the way, I had my phone in my pocket and it went flying. Somehow, I was able to pull up my old bronc riding skills from my past life, and I weathered the storm. I kicked the mule up into a lope and we went a few miles down the trail moving at a nice pace until I felt the mule had settled a bit then I loped back to my family.

Right away, I knew the rule I broke. I teach in the clinics that if something isn’t right with your mule, don’t just get on and hope for the best. Do something quality about it. This is where I messed up and broke my own rules. I figured I would be just fine. But the truth is, I knew that the mle

was tense and worried and I chose not to help her out that morning. You can call it lazy, you can call it being ignorant, call it what you want but I failed that mule that day. Luckily, I stayed safe, and was able to work through it but I broke rules that day and it honestly set me back in Lariats progression. I should have worked through the groundwork until she was quiet and comfortable but I failed. Time after time, we can look at any mess we find ourselves in with our mules and it can be traced back to breaking the rules. So my message to you this month is to stick with the process. We know that the process works. We have thousands of mules, horses, and donkeys with empirical evidence showing that the process, the “checklist” we teach, works. If only we don’t break our own rules. Thank you for taking the time to read, and if you ever have a suggestion or topic you would like me to write on, please email me at tv@tsmules.com God bless, and I hope to see you at a clinic sometime.



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