

## CONFIDENCE MEANS SO MUCH

My name is Skye Titmarsh, I am a young girl at the age of 11 and I love horses to bits. I live on a beautiful property and I have always loved horses but my family doesn't know anything about them. When I was younger I had a lovely little pony called Minnie, but sadly we never had enough time and experience for her. Since we have moved to Condamine I have met a wonderful girl that has horses and I really like riding them with her.

I had been looking for a special horse for ages and when I looked on Gumtree one morning I found an advertisement that sounded like the perfect horse. The add read "Quiet 22 year old registered quarter horse, great pony club horse, regretful sale of an absolute gentleman." Mum phoned the lady and she explained our situation clearly. The lady couldn't have said that Danny would be more perfect. We showed Dad the ad and we were off to see the horse the next day. I test rode Danny and he was beautiful to ride. The owners reassured us that if he was not suitable to bring him back. So we bought him that day, along with a horse float and all the gear – it was like a fairy tale!

For the next week, each afternoon I would come home from school and ride Danny around the house. Danny was no worries to handle and he was easy to ride, so on the weekend a week after I bought him I decided I would go for a bigger ride. I wanted to ride down the laneway, a ride that I had done many times on my friend's horse. I let Mum and Dad know my plan and I set off. Meanwhile they attended to a 10 minute job down the driveway. Everything started off well, so I decided to ask Danny to trot. It began as a fast trot which I thought was alright, then he began to canter which I couldn't stop. Within seconds he was galloping. I tried everything I knew to stop him but he would not stop. We came to a slight corner to the right but he only wanted to go to the left and he smashed into the fence. I flew over the top of his head and the fence. Danny's leg was lightly stuck in the fence so I got it out and we went on our way back to the house. Again he wanted to trot, I had to keep stopping. We only had 1km till home .....my concussion had now set in ..... Danny was found in the garden with the saddle underneath him and my stirrups were found down the paddock. I was found wondering around in the house not knowing where I was or what had just happened.

3 hours later

"Where am I" I said to myself. It turns out that I had just got out of a helicopter and was at Toowoomba Base Hospital. At first I did not realise anything was wrong with me. Mum explained I had a severe knock to the head and my left arm had been broken in three places. My minor injuries were cuts, particularly on my face and left leg. I was so thankful to be alive and well.

After coming out of hospital I was bruised, sore and sad. Mum and Dad contacted the previous owners of Danny but they denied any offer to return him. They didn't seem to have any care or concern for the horse that they had originally expressed they wanted a good home for. Our wonderful friends Toni and Duncan offered to ride Danny to make sure he was all good. As soon as they walked into the pen to halter him, Danny's behaviour seemed completely different. It took ages for him to be haltered, which was unusual. After a while he finally gave in. Following the accident, Duncan and two other experienced riders assessed Danny for us on different occasions. We soon realized that we had ended up with a horse of completely different nature to the one that we thought we had purchased. It was disheartening for me to learn that these people incorrectly advertised and did not stick to their word of taking the horse back.

A few weeks later, Toni sent us a text with a picture of her friend's chestnut mare called Deck. She was for sale and had been ridden by beginners. We thought about it for a bit because we were now fairly cautious. Finally we decided to go and have a look. Toni came with us to ride her for me as I still had a broken arm. When I entered the pen of horses, I was greeted by another horse that was completely my style. She was a bay mare, 6 years old and 14.2 hh. The owner, Avon, said "that's Chicka, you might like to loan her to help get your confidence back." At that point, I did not realize that I had lost my confidence. I was very excited and happy with the kind offer so I decided to loan the beautiful Chicka. Toni decided to trial Deck and she also loaned another little pony for her boys. When I tried to ride Chicka for the first time, I was horrified to find all the confidence I once had was gone. I went down to Toni's house to try riding with her, hoping to find some confidence, but it was not happening. I was so unhappy with myself that I began dreading the thought of riding. I was so scared and confused and started to resent riding. Fortunately something inside me still loved horses and I refused to give up despite many tears.

Mum and Dad decided to book me in for a weekend course at David Grace's. David is a 4 star Parelli Instructor, who lucky for me, happens to live not too far away. By the end of the course, I was walking and trotting around on Chicka in a halter and one reign. It was amazing and I became the happy bubbly little person I used to be. I was still lacking some confidence when riding but I had far more knowledge and experience that I ever did before. And to put a cherry on top of everything, Avon and her daughter agreed to sell Chicka to me!

I have just completed my second course with David Grace and every time I learn so much and meet so many lovely people. We are all on different levels, but in reality on the same journey with our horses. I have just joined the Savvy Club and I cannot thank the Parelli program enough for getting me back on my horsemanship journey. It has made me the person I am and I love who I am. Thank you so much to all the people who have cared and helped me so much over the last 12 months.

