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F E N C E L I N E



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# Kadence

## From Racehorse to Jumper

VIRGINIA JANES

The first time I saw Kadence he was a two-year-old racing prospect. My partner, Ted, had seen this gelding as a yearling at auction, but he hadn't liked the young horse's confirmation. A horse requires a good confirmation to stay sound when racing. Although he had been interested in the horse's pedigree, the young horse at that point in his growth was "hocky," meaning his hind legs had unsavoury angles. The yearling had gone through the auction without Ted buying him.

The man who broke the horse, Cal, a friend of Ted's, asked him to take another look at the two-year-old now that the horse had grown into himself and was in training to race. Now he was named Dirty Deeds, putting together his sire's name, Alydeed, and a favourite AC/DC song for someone associated with the horse's current owner. Still interested in the horse, Ted agreed to watch the young gelding train.

The morning was chill and clear when we arrived at Bar None Ranch to watch the young bay horse gallop on the track. The horse came in from Highfield Stock Farms where he was being trained by Cal for his current owner, who was interested in selling the horse.

When the trailer arrived, Deeds was on it by himself. Horses are herd animals, so this young horse riding calmly on a trailer alone showed good handling and acceptance of a broad education. The horse was growing into his body, and Ted liked what he saw as the horse was handled and galloped on the track. Deeds was a large two-year-old. He had a strong presence and good attitude. Ted now liked everything about the horse as a racing prospect, except his name. So Deeds changed hands and was renamed Kadence, although the nickname Deeds stayed with him as his racing "barn name."

Kadence proved to be an excellent racing purchase. Riders referred to him as a Cadillac, as his motion was smooth to ride. He won his first two starts as a two-year-old, and then won the three-year-old sales stakes, receiving a nomination for Alberta's three-year-old champion. He did not receive the title, but the nomination was a proud moment. As a four-year-old, Kadence bled—athletic condition where the capillaries are over-taxed and bleed into the lungs, making breathing difficult in a race. It took the race out of Kadence, and he was afraid to physically stress himself in races after that, for fear he wouldn't be able to breathe. He continued to race in lower level races and would win if he didn't need to stress himself. Kadence was claimed, but finished badly racing for his new owners. Ted claimed him back, giving the horse an opportunity to increase his career earnings to \$100K, before he retired Kadence from racing and gave the horse to me.

I had proudly followed Kadence's career and was extremely fond of the horse who had become a large, powerful, often willful racing athlete.

Kadence still had a presence. He had a lovely action when moving and would be a perfect athletic horse to ride, if I could calm him down from his racing "high." This proved a challenge beyond simply relaxing Kadence so he wasn't looking for the adrenaline rush of galloping to the finish line. Kadence is a playful horse and often likes to play the clown. I discovered, while sitting on him, that he could spin 360 degrees on the spot in three strides of a crow-hop pirouette. He could rear, taking his body to a 90-degree vertical height. To prance sideways and dance up and down when excited came naturally to him. The one thing he never did was put me on the ground. I was able to calmly sit on him through his antics and gently encourage him to carry on, explore

or ignore whatever had caused his willful behaviour. Soon he started to pay less attention to things around him and more attention to learning the riding signals I was teaching him. It was an interesting year.

That's not to say that Kadence still doesn't have interesting moments. However, they are rare and usually predictable. It was at this stage in his development that Kadence showed an interest in jumping on and off a tabletop "box" jump. We changed stables, and I approached a resident trainer, Cody, with a challenge: a woman who hadn't had a jumping lesson in over twenty years, and a horse who had never had one. After our first lesson, when which Kadence bravely jumped all that was asked of him, I was very proud.

Cody said, "I don't like your horse. I think you should give him to me and buy another one."

I laughed at that. I haven't been in the horse business this long without knowing a good line from a horse trader when I hear one.

Kadence continued to excel and happily jumped all obstacles placed before him. It was our third lesson before he refused a jump. Cody's eyes widened with his ability to brake, leap sideways and pass the jump, all while taking a rider that inertia should have planted on the ground. I told Cody that was one reason I liked the horse—whatever he did, he took me with him. Riding is a risk sport and a horse who keeps the rider safe by taking her along is worth his weight in gold.

After only a couple of months jumping, I entered a show Cody said would be fun and good experience. A group of his riders would be going to the schooling show, and it would be an education he felt Kadence was ready for. In preparation, Ted took Kadence for trailer rides to different stables, where I rode in unfamiliar settings, and then we trailered home again. It was a no-stress way to get him used to some of the activities of showing. We even took him to the show facility, Teesdale Stables, and Cody met us there and coached me. Cody and his other students would not be attending this show as the date was in conflict with another out-of-town show. Kadence was going to his first show without his coach.

After careful consideration, I decided to hold a "First Show Bath and Braiding Party" for Kadence. Armed with red wine and dark chocolate, Kadence hosted a party.

My friend Debbie whispered to Kadence to keep still

while Alana braided, and I kept my first-show-in-over-20-years nerves away from them. Lisa and Pat tried to help me calm my nerves with memorizing the jump course. Thanks to Debbie, we had a tentative setup of the course but no set jump order.

Pat helped with, "Think of the course like a song. Make up words and sing:

*It's time for fun at Jump One,  
Then into the blue Jump Two,  
Right turn and whee, it's Jump Three.  
Sing, girl, sing...  
Me and Kadence, hear us roar!"*

Lisa, one of the coaches at the barn, with wine in hand said, "Patterns are all set on diagonals and straight lines." And she gave me some valuable advice: take my time when I get on the course, run through the jump order in my head as I walk into the ring, and then pick the best spot to set Kadence up for the course. And breathe.

Kadence was handsome with his shiny coat, flowing black tail and beautiful, even, straight braids. To keep his braids clean, should he roll in his paddock, a slinky stretched over his nose, neck and shoulders. Kadence went out looking like the masked blue avenger without a cape, but he did have his raincoat on as it was scheduled to rain overnight. Once Kadence was in his shelter, munching hay and mash beside his buddy Minton, I packed his show bags, picked up the party leftovers and hugged everyone goodnight.

Next morning, bright and early, Kadence was on the trailer and off to the show to give it a go.

Once on the course, walking towards a spot to start the canter for the first fence, I ran the jumps through in my mind. I looked at the fences, counted and looked beside us as Kadence walked past a white fence with flowers set in front of it, and suddenly I realized this fence wasn't a jump included in the course I'd just run through my mind. Where the heck had it come from and how did it fit into the jumping pattern? I hadn't even started and I was lost. Shoot!

Kadence turned his head and gave me a glance over his shoulder that said, "Mom, I need a GPS."

"Right, sorry, they don't make them for horses, baby. You're stuck with me as your navigator."

My substitute coach Sara called that I was headed in the wrong direction. Yep, I knew that, but I still didn't know where that jump fit in. I thought I'd just forget that fence, or maybe when we were jumping I'd

remember where it fit in and take it...? So we turned, I quickly spun the fences through my head one more time and set Kadence in motion towards the first fence. He picked up a nice smooth rhythm towards the first fence. I directed him to the middle, and he collected and sprang up underneath me to easily clear the first obstacle. He was amazing! Kadence jumped all the fences I directed him to, and happily kept me safe, on course and in the saddle.

I was so proud of him. He jumped the last fence, looking for the next one, but slowed after I told him he did it! We'd done this round. I proudly patted his neck and told him how wonderful he was. As he walked towards the exit, I gave him a loose rein, and he perked his ears to listen to the applause he'd earned. Yes, his pilot made transition, stride and gait errors, but we did the course together, and he was perfect!

Oh, and that fence I couldn't remember? It was just out there and not part of the course. Phew! We jumped it on the next course.

We did three more courses, and as I exited the last class, I was approached by Equine Medication Control, as Kadence had been selected for a random drug test. I was told we could do this after the ribbon presentation. Not expecting anything, I suggested we do it immediately. Being a winning racehorse, Kadence had been tested before and was used to the process. As I was untacking him, my friend Debbie ran up.

Debbie was priceless. The whole day, every time I saw her and she helped me out, she was carrying a tray of coffee. She reminded me of a poster girl for the White Spot—an old-fashioned drive-through restaurant. Excitedly bobbing the tray up and down without spilling a drop, she told me my name was being called for ribbons. I ran back to the ring to collect Kadence's ribbons, while Ted oversaw the test collection. I returned to find Kadence had been the perfect candidate and had filled his container while I picked up his ribbons from the nice young rider who had collected them on our behalf.

Kadence received sixth- and fifth-place finishes for his first-time efforts in the show ring. And I received another shot of pride for the amazing horse who had worked to win races for Ted, and now with his new career, had started in the show ring by bringing home ribbons with me. Better things are still to come, and perhaps in the jumping circuit he'll achieve that championship acclaim.

Kadence, for me, is gold.



Kadence - Second win, October 8, 2006



Kadence showing me he wanted to be a jumper by jumping on and off the 'tabletop.'

