

Hustler SP

with Olivia Palfreyman

SYNOPSIS

Stable name: *Hustler* or *Hussle*

Height: 17.1hh

Age: 6

Breeding: AQHA & PHAA
(*Don't Rulerout* x *Tribulation (IMP)*)

Owner/rider: Olivia Palfreyman

Top 5 results:

- Grand Champion Show Hunter/Hack at the 2019 PHAA Nationals, HBGA Congress, NSWPHA State and 2020 NSWQHA State
- NSWQHA State Championships 2020 – Highest Dressage Score Award (80%)
- Numerous wins with scores up to 79% at EA dressage competitions
- 18x National and 17x State Champion in dressage, show hunter/hack, led hack and hunter in hand in 2018-19
- Top ten placings at the 2019 Australian Youth Dressage Championships as a four-year-old

How did *Hustler* come into your life?

I was looking for a Quarter Horse for my mother and a dressage prospect (likely Warmblood) for myself in mid-2017 and these two searches crossed paths when Paul Egan, *Hustler's* breeder, contacted me and told me he had the horse for us. Being only three and a colt, *Hustler* really wasn't what Mum was after, and although I absolutely adored him for myself, I put the decision off for quite a while, thinking I wanted to make the move to a more traditional dressage breed after retiring my last Quarter Horse *HL That's Gold*. Thankfully, Paul knew better than me about where *Hustler* belonged and kept popping up in my messages for about two months before I gave in and booked the truck to bring him home. Best decision ever, he is my once in a lifetime horse.

What was your first ride on him like?

Simply incredible. I had not ridden or seen *Hustler* before he arrived here, and it wasn't until two weeks later we got our first ride so I really didn't have the biggest expectations in the world. I may as well have because at the time I had never ridden anything as impressive nor as willing. The thing I remember most is my non-horsey dad sitting there for the whole ride just smiling and going wow; that is what *Hustler* is like, a complete pleasure to watch.

Did he have any training issues?

Hustler is a big and strong horse which really is just the result of Quarter Horse tendencies. However, these aren't really big issues and when resolved make him the impressive picture he is. My training

philosophy is you train your horse for what they personally are capable of, not what the industry demands of them at that age, so we carefully address them as they come up and we really don't have many major qualms as we progress.

How did he handle his first show?

Albeit a lack of steering, perfectly. I somewhat expected the worst having been training/competing young riding ponies prior to purchasing *Hustler* (picture: airs above the ground), but he waltzed on and off the float like a pro, walked around the grounds quietly and just went straight to work. He was such a giant baby with an equally giant canter, which at this point he found a little hard to control, so the only problem was the few times we just about went out the arena instead of turning!



Olivia and *Hustler* at the 2020 NSWQHA State Championships
Ace Photography



How has your training differed to cater for a range of disciplines?

Crossing between disciplines is all about knowing what your standards of excellence are in training and understanding how you can adapt these to meet the expectations of each industry. My standards always focus on biomechanical correctness and working to create a confident horse as I develop them along the training scale. I find moving from this dressage focus to the show ring quite seamless, and generally, to create the extra show ring pizzazz needed, I just allow the horses to show their personalities a little more as I believe their creativity and spunk is what captures the judges' eyes. For the less developed/softer horses I focus on adding an ounce more boldness, as I find the horses must look like they know and truly mean they are the best in the ring. *Hustler* enters the ring with a natural 'ta-da' attitude which always helps!

Most annoying habit or quirk? He is a serial shoe puller, much to my farrier's delight. I guess that is what you get when you think you are a racehorse and have legs too long for the rest of you!

"Hustler has taught me to dance with my horses and not instruct them."

Strongest personality trait? *Hustler* is basically an entitled version of my forever loyal Labrador x Staffy, he owns all the world and especially me. He believes he is entitled to my presence 24/7 and will create a total ruckus if I am not paying him enough attention.

Preferred work environment? I am pretty sure a nice indoor arena is on *Hustler's* Christmas wish list, but he is very good at working anywhere.

Work ethic? *Hustler* is the ultimate professional when it comes to working, he knows his job and gets right to it. He is still young and is a complete class clown, so occasionally takes some reminding of what we are meant to be doing, but other than that, it is great on great!

How does he handle the big occasions? Big occasions are *Hustler's* prime time. If he had a choice, he would live at facilities like AELEC or SIEC 24/7. He thinks permanent stabling with hundreds of other people

around him is the absolute dream, and this about sums up his entire experience away from home! He loves working for a crowd being a total showman, so these shows are often where he does his best work.

Weekly training regime? A general week in the life of *Hustler* includes four to five days of ridden work (including a lesson a fortnight), one day of pole work on the lunge and/or one 'mental health day' out trail riding. *Hustler* is a horse that thrives on consistency and loves being worked, so this suits him well.

What has he taught you as a rider? *Hustler* has totally reshaped me as a rider, especially mentally. He has taught me to dance with my horses and not instruct them, to forgive immediately when horses make mistakes and to look at the silver linings of training. He's taught me to hit pause and say thank you when horses answer questions well, to not be greedy in training but trust you can give away

the good feeling and get it back, and to stay receptive to yourself and the horse. Most importantly, he has reminded me that if you love your horses, you will be loved back unconditionally. My journey with *Hustler* has really helped me be more transparent and real when sharing updates on our events and training, too. I think it is so crucial our up and coming riders know it is okay to make mistakes and not be perfect. We are, after all, only human.

Does he have a best friend? *Hustler's* all-time best friend is a little Shetland we used to ride with called *Whisky*. At home, *Hustler's* full sister *Sarina (Prima Donna SP)* is his best buddy in a sibling rivalry sort of way, and they are a great combo away competing together. *Hustler* also has a secret admirer in his stable buddy *Ellroy (Western Perfexion)*. This goes along the line of *Hustler* tried to hide from *Ellroy* behind the solid wooden wall of the stables, so *Ellroy* spent a week eating a hole in the wood until he could see *Hustler* again – so it isn't a very mutual love!

What is the first thing on your shopping list for him? Hygain Smoochies and sugar cubes. You can bribe him to do anything with these. If *Hustler* made his own shopping list it would be filled with custom gear. He has a real thing for his Mal Byrne bridles and frankly doesn't fit anything else. How convenient!

When was the last time he made you laugh or cry? My life is constant laughter with *Hustler*! Every morning I open the stable door to him staring at me with his giant and ever-playful eyes, and he wanders over and wraps himself around me for his morning scratch and hello. It makes my morning, every morning.

Most treasured moment together? We have so many, our first Nationals together in 2018 was very special and I have a beautiful photo of me just hugging him at the end of our first dressage test because I was just so grateful for my dance partner. The photo is the best reminder of what it is all about, and yes, hugging has become a tradition of ours! However, the most treasured, but also bittersweet, moment together was when *Hustler* won the Ange Peters Memorial Grand Champion Hack at the 2019 PHAA National Championships. Ange and I competed together during my youth years and shared many a special competition memory, but most important was the support and reassurances she offered to me as I grew as a rider. Her passing hit quite hard. So this naturally has a very special place in my heart – not for the award, but for riding with our memories in mind. I'm not a teary sort of person but I definitely was that day!

What celebrity does he remind you of?

Hustler thinks he is a celebrity in his own right, but if he was a human one, I think it'd be someone like Chris Hemsworth with the good looks, the surfy vibes and the slightly envious amount of talent. *Hustler* would probably want me to mention all his fangirls too.

The next 12 months... We've worked hard during the COVID break to refine our training, and now that competitions have returned *Hustler* has made his Elementary debut. In the next 12 months, I'll look to solidifying his results here, hopefully have some medium starts and keep moving through the higher-level work in our training. I'm excited to return to the big competitions in 2021, like the NSW Dressage Championships and the AQHA and PHAA State and National Championships.

What's your ultimate goal with Hustler?

All things going to plan, hitting FEI levels and moving to the top from there. I would obviously love to see him at Grand Prix and I do think he has the mindset for it. That sounds like a crazy goal, but so is this whole journey, so we will try our hardest! I'd also love to get him to some Royals in the future, and while we are being crazy, Grand Nationals would be a dream come true.

3 things we don't know about Hustler SP...

1. He has a fear of black tarps/sheets.
2. He is absolutely obsessed with scratches. If you've met him you know that, because there is a 99.9% chance he would have demanded you scratch him.
3. His favourite end-of-competition treat is my mum's "butterfly scratches," which are little tiny tickles on the side of his muzzle. Who knows!



Olivia and *Hustler* at the 2019 PHAA Nationals
Photo: Oz Shotz

A thank you from Olivia: It takes a village to develop a horse and there are lots of people and businesses I have to say thank you to. Our sponsors, Hairy Pony and Natures Pharmacy (Julie Cook), have been incredible in helping me keep Hustler looking his best. I'm also so grateful of the support of the likes of Kristen Closson our coach, Rebecca Hill our Osteopath, Paula Jeffery from Performance Saddle Fits, Rebecca Forsythe from Hunter Equine Vets, Bob and the team from Coalfields Shoeing, Peter from Equibreed Oz and my beautiful family. We could not do it without your guidance and support.