

Hi everyone! First off, a disclaimer, I have been reviewing this product for the past 11 years. Here's a little background. When I was 16, we bought Maddie, my percheron/thoroughbred mare, and I became addicted to eventing. Eventing consists of three phases; dressage, stadium jumping and cross country, and different equipment is obviously needed for each phase. My parents weren't thrilled with purchasing three new sets of tack, so they tasked me with finding a saddle that would suit me well enough for the time being in all disciplines. I did my research and landed on the Bates Close Contact saddle. A few things that initially intrigued me on this particular saddle were the gullet change system, the adjustable knee padding and the rich brown color. While this now seems a little superficial, my 16-year-old self was insistent on having a light-colored saddle on my seal-bay horse. I also wanted a saddle that would compliment my seat and allow me to ride with contact for dressage, but be light enough for me to ride cross country. I placed the order and still remember the day I received it in the mail.

A really practical feature of this saddle is the EASY-CHANGE® Fit Solution. This allows you to switch out gullet sizes with just a few turns of some screws. It was really helpful to have as Maddie matured and gained muscle, as I didn't have to purchase a brand new saddle.

Another feature of the Bates Close Contact saddle is The CAIR® Cushion System, which according to the Bates saddles website, is focused on distributing the rider's weight evenly and cushioning the horse's back. Bates uses air cushions in place of traditional fillings in order to provide the most possible comfort to the horse. In the 11 years that I've owned her, Maddie has scarcely had a sore backed day, and I think that I have this saddle to thank in part to that.

I don't often get too attached to material things, but this saddle has now been with me as long as I've owned Maddie and it is a part of us. From the early days of Pony Club, to moving to Colorado, it has supported me through it all. Throughout these journeys, I have tried my hardest to preserve and take care of it as best I can. I clean it often and it stays covered and protected when it isn't in use. It is so important to properly maintain your investment, especially with our high dollar gear.

For more information on Bates Saddles please visit: [Batessaddles.com](http://Batessaddles.com). Thanks for tuning in! learn more about the AskAnnie podcast by following us on Facebook and Instagram at AskAnnie podcast. Have a suggestion for a product you like me to use in an upcoming episode? Email me at [askanniepodcast@gmail.com](mailto:askanniepodcast@gmail.com) or leave a comment on any of our social media pages. Find even more AskAnnie episodes anywhere you listen to podcasts including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube and many more. The AskAnnie podcast is a production at the Equine Podcast Network, an entity of Active Interest Media and the Equine Network.