

# PRACTICAL HORSEMAN

A photograph of a rider in a blue jacket and helmet jumping a brown horse over a blue obstacle. The rider is wearing a blue jacket, white shirt, and tie, and is wearing a dark helmet with a gold emblem. The horse is in mid-air, clearing the obstacle. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

Expert how-to for English riders • July 2018

***Olympian  
McLain Ward***

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- Find out five key flatwork training tips from Olympian Anne Kursinski.
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# PRACTICAL HORSEMAN

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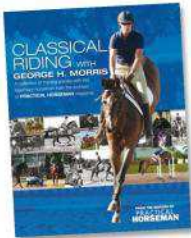
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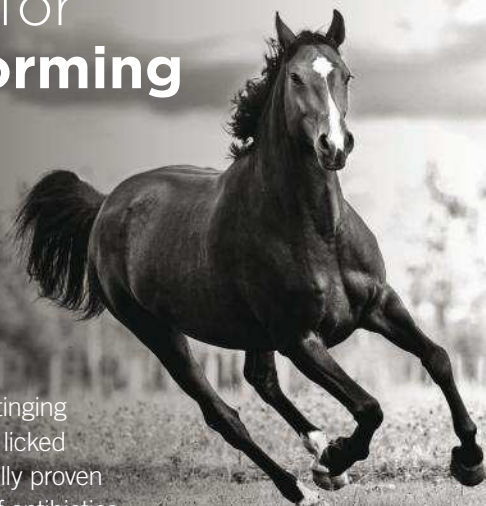
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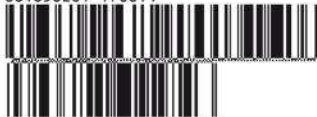


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## Editor's Note

### Live Vicariously

**W**e have a *real* problem," says a bloke with several-days-old stubble on his face. The video with the ominous staccato music pans to two squat, riderless ponies racing toward the mountainous horizon with a lone figure chasing them. "Saddle's gone. Horse's gone. What do we do?" continues the chap to his equally grungy mate as they trudge after the ponies.

This video has nothing to do with the sporthorses we cover in the pages of this magazine, but I'm captivated. It's about Mongolian horses, who, when they're not bucking off their riders, are flying across the countryside of grassy plains, rocks, rivers and salt pans in the Mongol Derby, an annual race that involves riding 25 different horses more than 600 miles in, of course, Mongolia.

Why am I telling you about this? Because *Practical Horseman's* 31-year-old Associate Editor Jocelyn Pierce will be taking part in this race next month.

When she first said she'd been accepted into the race toward the end of last year, I didn't really get the magnitude. I listened politely as she showed me a presentation and said the magazine would support her. That night, I watched the aforementioned video, part of the presentation.

*Jeez, she's going to kill herself*, I thought as a pony leaped around with head between his knees, butt in the air at a checkpoint with the handlers being tossed at the end of the lead rope. The video continued: A woman says she lost her GPS the first hour of the seven to 10-day race and had to rely on the goodwill of Mongolian nomads and maps to find her way. Another woman, her voice crackling, adds, "We all have chafing in places where you shouldn't ever chafe."

I've enjoyed living vicariously through Jocelyn, an eventer who has started her own homebred filly as well as others, preps and you can, too. She is writing about her adventures in a weekly blog at *PracticalHorsemanMag.com* as well as in monthly reports in the magazine in Tips & Talk (page 54 this month). And once the race starts (August 8, my birthday, which I'm taking to be a good omen for her), we'll follow her with the help of the Mongol Derby press and GPS trackers. Then she'll tell us all about her adventures in her online reports and in an upcoming issue.

So join me in being a cheerleader for Jocelyn in this chance of a lifetime. (You can email her at [jpierce@aimmedia.com](mailto:jpierce@aimmedia.com).) And so you have a complete sense of what it's going to take for Jocelyn to return to us intact, watch the video I refer to here on the Mongol Derby's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK3SpdIXvD4>. There's also a link to this video on her blog.

Go Jocelyn!

*Sandy*

Sandra Oliynyk



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### Tip of the Month

Michael Jung's extraordinary balance over his horse starts with the rock-solid security of his lower leg.—**Jim Wofford, page 16**

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# Which Two Horses Would George Love to Ride?



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**1** Over the years, the only other person I've known to be as obsessed about stirrup-iron position as I is Helen Crabtree, the doyenne of saddle-seat equitation about 40 years ago. She said, "George, it starts with the stirrup iron." It's such a trivial-appearing thing, but in my own experience, it's critical because it is the foundation of position and balance.

With that in mind, I want this very nice rider to twist her iron so that the outside branch is a little ahead of the inside. This puts the iron perpendicular to the girth, which allows for a suppler leg. Otherwise, her leg is excellent: Her toes are turned out, her heels are down, her ankles are flexed and there is even distribution of contact between her thigh, inner knee bone and calf.

This is how a rider's base of support must look: The thrust of the horse's jumping effort has tossed her seat out of the saddle. Her posture is excellent and she's using her eyes well in the left turn. This is a good example of a long crest release. It's like placing a hand on a table—it supports you while giving the horse freedom. However, if the hands are thrown more than halfway up the neck as you often see in the hunter ring today, that is unnecessarily maligning the crest release.

This is a lovely horse whom I'd love to jump. With a beautiful head and expression in his eyes and ears, he has an impeccable front end and his rider is letting him drop his head and neck. He is not the roundest over the low fence but his hind end is following through nicely.

He is also beautifully turned out. His coat shines, he's a good weight and he's braided. The rider has correctly put a red ribbon in his tail, indicating that he kicks. I'd prefer a white saddle pad because I think it dresses up a horse. I'd also like the rider to wear the more traditional navy or hunter-green coat. The overall picture is a bit gray and musty for my taste.

**2** This child is a good rider, an athlete, with a beautiful leg. To be picky, the outside branch of the stirrup iron could be twisted just slightly farther forward, but she is correctly feeling the outside branch with her little toe. I like the iron's heavy-duty stainless steel and its narrow width from front to back. Her toes are out, her heels are well down and her ankle is flexed.

Her seat is also fine. She's not jumping ahead or dropping back. She's a very balanced rider. She's also fit, something I think riders have an obligation to be for the comfort of their horses. It's part of horsemanship. I don't want anorexic riders, but I don't want them overweight either. This rider also has beautiful posture. And look how serious she is—she is not wasting her time, her trainer's or the horse's. I love her.

She's attempting an automatic release, but her hands are too high and rotating back so she's lifting this horse over the fence. You can see there's pressure on the horse's mouth—he's smiling a little. This is not good for the horse because he can start to depend on being held off the jumps. While still using her leg, she needs to lower her hands a little and have a softer, more following contact on his mouth. Her pony might hit the jump the first few times, but he'll learn to use himself better.

The pony has a big roman nose and plain head, and he's just stepping over this jump with an uneven front end, but he appears to be safe. He's healthy and in a good weight but there's not much attempt at turnout. He could be better trimmed around his pasterns and his mane could be pulled. I don't like the light-colored tack and it doesn't seem to be well made. The trick with tack is to buy quality, which will save you money in the long run. Lesser tack wears out and breaks. I also think her boots could have more shine.



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**George H. Morris** is the former chef d'équipe of the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Team. He serves on the USEF National Jumper Committee and Planning Committee, is an adviser to the USEF High-Performance Show Jumping Committee and is president of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.



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**3** Eventers have license to put their stirrup irons farther back on their feet than hunter or jumper riders do and this rider is a great example of how to do this. But I'm not advocating this stirrup position because top eventers, like Germany's Michael Jung, ride with only one-quarter of their foot in the iron, which allows for a suppler leg. The rest of her leg is beautiful with toes turned out, heels down and ankles flexed. Some trainers teach that toes should be parallel to the horse's sides, but I don't agree because it pulls the calves away from the horse's sides.

She has an impeccable base of support with her seat just out of the saddle enough. There's no hint of her ducking, dropping back or jumping ahead. She has perfect body control. Her eyes are looking up and ahead—she has wonderful focus. Her release is closest to a following hand with an almost-straight line from her elbow to the horse's mouth. She has excellent contact: She is giving what the horse is taking. To make it textbook perfect, she would need to lower her hand about 2 inches. Overall, I really like this rider.

This flea-bitten gray has a beautiful head with attentive and alert ears and eyes. He has an impeccable front end with his knees up by his eyeballs. You want a horse's forearms to be parallel to the ground and this horse's are higher. Below his knees, his right leg is a little looser than his left, and he could pull both feet closer to his elbows, but that's not a necessity. He's not the roundest jumper, but he jumps boldly and correctly with thrust and scope. I'd love to ride this horse.

He is also well cared for. He's clean and trimmed with his tail pulled. The tack looks clean and understated as does the saddle pad, so the horse's beauty is what you notice first. The rider's turnout also looks clean, sharp and workmanlike.

**4** This relaxed, bold rider, who is with her horse, would be even better with a few adjustments. The stirrup iron is forward on her toe, putting her at risk of losing it. She needs to move it back about a half-inch and position it so her little toe touches the outside branch. I'm not a fan of wide (front to back) stirrups or ones that are too light. If you lose them, they fly around and are hard to retrieve; heavy stainless-steel irons are much easier to retrieve. This rider has too much grip in her knee, which takes her lower leg off her horse so it swings back. She needs to work on getting her heels down and making sure there is even distribution of contact among her thigh, inner knee and calf.

Going hand in hand with pivoting from the knee is a seat that is too far out of the saddle. She has good posture and she is looking to the left. This is an excellent demonstration of the short crest release. She's resting her hands up the neck an inch or two and the rein is a little slack with a broken line above the mouth. To improve the release, she could drop her hands 3–6 inches to create a straight line from her elbow to the horse's mouth.

This horse has a dramatic front end. He's almost hitting his chest with his feet. I'm not sure if this is a gag-type bit. If so, I suggest she use a rubber rein on the snaffle ring and a leather rein on the curb ring. Using just one rein on the curb ring can cause a horse to jump high-headed and a little flat.

The lesson she gives us is beautiful turnout. The horse is groomed impeccably and is in beautiful weight. His coat blooms. He's been braided. Her tack, saddle, breeches and boots are clean. The rubber rein is absolutely clean. This rider is a horsewoman. Horsemanship doesn't start in the winner's circle; it starts with the horse. Today that is not the norm—now it's dying out, which is scary. Top caretakers are becoming extinct. 🐾

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Based at Fox Covert Farm, in Upperville, Virginia, Jim Wofford competed in three Olympics and two World Championships and won the U.S. National Championship five times. He is also a highly respected coach. For more on Jim, go to [www.jimwofford.blogspot.com](http://www.jimwofford.blogspot.com).

## Best Horses, Best Riders, Best Weather = Best Weekend

Jim's Kentucky Three-Day Event review will make you extra sorry if you missed it this year.

The 2018 Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event lived up to its billing as the "Best Weekend All Year." Held at the CCI\*\*\*\* level and celebrating its 21st anniversary, the event showcased the Kentucky Horse Park with

sparkling weather, enough activities to keep even the most jaded spectators entertained, a gold-medal-winning list of competitors and beautiful horses everywhere you looked. Spectators' overwhelming opinion: This was one of the best events held at the KHP since the 1978 World Championships.

Beginning with the low (lower the better) scores in the dressage phase, it quickly became clear that the audience was in for a treat. This year brought a change in the dressage scoring rules, which compressed the dressage results. At the end of two days of dressage,

## Winner Oliver Townend and Cooley Master Class

1. Derek di Grazia designs cross-country courses that require brave, accurate riding. My definition of "brave" is to gallop into a 6-foot-6 drop into water with a very big corner three long strides after the landing on a horse who has never been to a four-star event. Eventual Kentucky winners Oliver Townend and Cooley Master Class (Coolio) are shown here at Fence 18AB, the Land Rover Head of the Lake, the signature cross-country jump at the Kentucky Horse Park. Ollie knows the distance in the water is long and he has selected the brave option by approaching the question at an open gallop rather than a slower and more controlled canter. In the air, Ollie is already planning his line to the corner and Coolio looks like, "That all you got?"

2. Ollie's lower leg is in the right place and Coolio is going to land in balance. However, you are about to

see why I disapprove of cross-country riders with longer stirrups. All of Ollie's angles are correct and his touch on the reins is just right, but he has allowed his weight to settle onto the saddle. In a split second, Coolio's hind end will deliver Ollie a monumental kick in the seat of the pants.

3. This is why riders need shorter stirrups when landing over a big drop. Certainly four-star speed is a factor in riding shorter, but the essential reason for shorter stirrups is that big drops cause horses to lift their hind end to clear the obstacle on the way down. Look back at the previous image and imagine that Ollie had kept the same exact angles, but shorter stirrup leathers had raised the points of his knees an inch or so higher in the saddle. His seat bones would then be a commensurate amount above the saddle and Coolio would have room



PHOTOS © NANCY JAFFER





roughly half of the competitors were within 10 points of first place.

The heart of any eventing competition is the cross-country course, and course designer Derek di Grazia demonstrated how amazingly difficult a cross-country course can be at this level. Yet the equally amazing horses and riders that galloped around it showed how easy they could make a four-star course look. At the end of the cross-country phase, there were 10 horses and riders within one show-jumping knockdown of first place. More on this in a minute.

## Results

<u>Place/Rider/Country</u>	<u>Horse</u>	<u>Score</u>
1. Oliver Townend (GBR).....	Coolley Master Class.....	28.7
2. Michael Jung (GER).....	fischerRocana FST .....	31.5
3. Marilyn Little (USA) .....	RF Scandalous .....	32.8
4. Phillip Dutton (USA) .....	Z.....	33.7
5. Lauren Kieffer (USA) .....	Vermiculus.....	34.8
6. Lynn Symansky (USA) .....	Donner.....	35.3
7. Oliver Townend (GBR).....	MHS King Joules .....	35.3
8. Sharon White (USA).....	Coolley On Show .....	35.6

to use his back without disturbing Ollie's balance. This is not Ollie's first rodeo and he is catching his balance with his knuckles against Coolio's neck while keeping his eyes on the next jump.

4. There is not enough room between the obstacles for Ollie to get his reins back. Instead, he has opened his arms to lift his hands, bring his elbows back and maintain contact and control. (I want my one- and two-star riders to get their reins back before five strides while three- and four-star riders have four strides to get their reins back.) Coolio is already measuring the next obstacle by lifting his head and Ollie has a straight line between his elbow and the bit. The stability of his upper body here is based on his lower-leg position. Ollie is a clever rider—he knows Coolio sprawled a bit on landing, but the striding is long and he has used that to cover the distance. One stride later, he has Coolio on a balanced, open gallop with his horse's hocks well under him and ready for the next fence.

5. "When in doubt, wait it out," is the experienced cross-country rider's maxim. Ollie makes sure Coolio actually jumps before he bends over. He is soft with his reins but slightly behind the motion. It is better to be a second behind the motion than a split-second in front of it. Most glance-offs at upper cross-country levels are caused by riders assuming that because they see their stride, their horse will jump. I call this mistake "riding off your eye, not your leg."

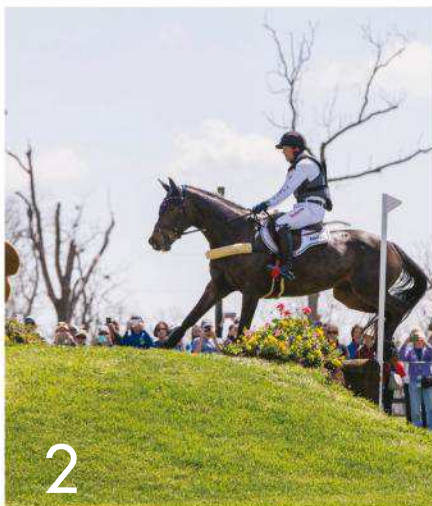
6. Coolio is landing well beyond the maximum corner and Ollie is already planning his turn to another obstacle. Riders finish Derek di Grazia's courses and remark on the relentless nature of his designs, which are both physically and mentally challenging. At the four-star level, you can't afford to take a break. Ollie is still taking care of business. This pair will gallop on to come home inside the time, setting themselves up to win the 2018 Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event.



© NANCY JAFFER

# Michael Jung and fischerRocana FST

PHOTOS © MACKENZIE CLARK



For the last few years, Michael Jung (The Terminator) and fischerRocana FST (Roxie) have come over from Germany and given us free riding lessons. By the time they jumped up onto the Normandy Bank at Fence 21ABCD this year, they had already won this event three times—in a row—and were the favorites to win it a fourth. You can see what an effort it takes from both horse and rider to jump a big bank with a big ditch in front of it. Michael has driven his heels down and slightly back in order to stay with Roxie. His reins are a bit too long for my taste, but he consistently rides her on a long rein and so far it has worked out pretty well for him.

The bounce from the edge of the bank to the log is long, which means horse and rider need to be aggressive. It takes a special kind of horse to be aggressive at a jump when she is not able to see the landing on the other side. Michael knows this and he is landing in a driving position. One of the many lessons Michael is giving here is that when he moves slightly behind Roxie, he does not pull back on the reins to keep his balance.

Roxie completely trusts her rider. She would jump off the south edge of the Grand Canyon if Michael asked, so a simple bounce into a big drop is catnip for her. At the same time, you can see from his eyes that Michael is already planning his turn to the next element. His extraordinary balance over his horse starts with the rock-solid security of his lower leg. When going cross country, Michael rides shorter than most American riders. Note that he has just over a 90-degree angle behind his knee in the air. The correct length for show-jumping stirrups is a 90-degree angle behind the rider's knee when seated.

If ever there were a sport designed for live television, it would be eventing. After the dressage and cross-country phases, riders enter the show-jumping arena in reverse order of standing. This means that those who do best in the first two phases must wait the longest to jump. If riders have any tendency toward nerves, a long, suspenseful wait does little to assuage them.

The tight scores were guaranteed to produce a nail-biting finish, and the last few rounds were jumped in an eerie silence in front of more than 10,000 spectators. Jumping last, Germany's Michael Jung and fischerRocana FST (Roxie) were in first place—until Michael made a slight miscalculation at the big triple bar. The four faults dropped him to second place. Minutes earlier, Great Britain's Oliver Townend and Cooley Master Class



The brushes at 21C and 21D are 4-foot-7 while the solid rails are "only" 3-foot-9. Riders learn from experience and horses learn as well. This is not Roxie's first experience with brush and she is stepping through it without expending much effort. Obviously, if there is a problem here it will be that horses will tend to duck out to the right. While something might be an obvious problem, it is still a problem. Michael knows this and has opened his left rein to remind Roxie to stay straight.

People think that brush fences are easy, and in many cases they are, but when Derek builds two in a row, it gets complicated in a hurry, as you'll see in the next photo. When horses brush through a fence, they tend to land a little short. This makes a long distance really long.



4

If you compare the last photo to this one, you see that Michael's stirrup leather has remained vertical throughout the efforts. The stability of his lower leg explains the sensitive touch he maintains on Roxie's mouth. We are on the wrong side to tell, but I suspect that as they jumped up onto the bank, Michael asked Roxie to land on her left lead. This makes their turn down to the angled brushes at 21CD that much easier. (Yes, four-star horses and riders really are that good these days.)



5

Roxie already sees her next fence and Michael is simply maintaining their balance in the approach. Genius doesn't make the simple appear complex; it makes the complex appear simple. It helps to simplify things, however, if your basic position is this correct.



6

Jumps 21CD are built on a severe angle with a one-stride distance between the elements that walks a little long. A hallmark of Derek di Grazia's cross-country course design is that he builds angled obstacles on long distances. Visualize yourself galloping down a balance beam in a gymnastic competition at almost 20 miles per hour and you will have an idea of the straightness and accuracy it takes to jump his courses well. Michael understands this and is putting his leg on Roxie to make sure she jumps 21C aggressively.



8

Several experienced riders jumped 21C well, landed brain-dead—and got a half stride followed by a glance-off because they assumed their horse had walked the course with them. This is not breaking news to Michael, who is landing in a very strong, driving position. Look at the slight twist in his shoulders and his open left rein. The Terminator is taking care of business.



9

As Roxie goes out of sight behind the brush, you get some perspective on how big four-star fences really are plus the courage and skill it takes to gallop over them. If you asked me one thing above all others that makes Michael unusual, I would say that he never moves in front of an obstacle until his horse jumps.



10

My suspicion is that Michael's left heel is up slightly because he is asking Roxie to land on her right lead and accelerate away from 21D. Roxie is obviously loving her job and Michael looks like just another day at the four-star office. I mentioned that Michael was giving out free riding lessons—any questions? Class dismissed.

PHOTOS © MACKENZIE CLARK

had jumped a clear round. With Michael's rail, Ollie had won this year's prize.

As if this weren't exciting enough, it also meant that Ollie now had two legs on the Rolex Grand Slam, awarded to the rider who can win Kentucky, the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials and the Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials in sequence, but in any order. Ollie won Burghley last fall and was the winner here in the U.S., which gave him two legs on the trophy. After Kentucky he was off to Badminton the following week to see if his luck would hold for one more weekend. It didn't. Winning the Rolex Grand Slam is one of the most difficult feats in the horse world, and Ollie came as close as possible to winning it, finishing second at Badminton.

The crowds at the Kentucky Horse Park are special. More than 70,000 people attended this year, and this is an event where everyone is in a good mood, everyone is having a good time and that just makes the atmosphere all the more special. One new thing in 2018 made a real impression on me. The opening ceremonies in the main arena featured a dynamite singer, Dr. Everett McCorvey from the University of Kentucky, who sang our national anthem.

Next thing you know, the entire audience—sky boxes, main stands, cheap seats and the SRO (standing room only) folks outside the arena watching it on the Jumbotron—joined in and sang along with him at full volume. I can't remember the last time that has happened at any sporting event, and it really gave me a lift. I hope it is a new tradition for the Best Weekend All Year. 🐾

## Marilyn Little and RF Scandalous



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**Good horses make hard courses look easy.** RF Scandalous (Kitty) and Marilyn Little are in the middle of a serious four-star combination with long distances between elements. You can see the angle that Kitty is taking across the Angled Cabin at 6C while Marilyn is already measuring her left turn toward a 90-degree corner. Because she rides with a little-too-long stirrup leather for upper level cross-country work, Marilyn has to stand up straight in the stirrups to stay with Kitty's prodigious effort. She is in the right place at the top of their arc over the cabin, but her straight knee will magnify the shock of landing. Details like this did not prevent this pair from winning this year's National Four-Star Championship, as the top-placed U.S. combination in the event.

## Sara Gumbiner and Polaris



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Sara Gumbiner and Polaris, shown here at the B element of 15AB, the Fallen Trees, are about halfway around and just starting to think that maybe, just maybe, they are up to a four-star challenge. When you are the only rookie in the field, you might get the feeling of being a little lonely at your first four-star. Fortunately for Sara, she brought a good friend along. Polaris is Irish, which tells you all you need to know about his cross-country attitude. Sara is following my own career path—find a good horse, get good coaching, bend over, put your hands down and ride like you are going to live forever. This pair had some minor mistakes, but they were not serious and nothing that can't be fixed.

## Sharon White and Cooley On Show



© AMY K. DRAGOO/AMMEDIA

Sharon White and Cooley On Show (Louie) had a lot to prove. Kentucky did not go well for them last year and they are obviously jumping with renewed determination. Louie is one of the best jumpers in the business and he has jumped the Fallen Log at Fence 15A a little too boldly and is drifting off the correct path. Fence 15B, an identical log, is set off to the left a few strides away. Sharon has her eyes fixed firmly on their line and is already making the necessary corrections. Her open left rein and the pressure of her right leg will put Louie back on the right track. There are riders who make it happen, riders who watch it happen and riders who wonder, "What happened?" Sharon and Louie are making it happen.

## Will Coleman and Tight Lines



© AMY K. DRAGOO/AMMEDIA

Like Will Coleman and Tight Lines, you would be grinning, too, if your nice young horse had just jumped his first big-time four-star combination really, really well to finish 12th. People ask me why we ride cross-country? This.

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Success in under-saddle classes requires a combination of homework, ring awareness and judicious displays of your horse's strengths. Here I'm practicing asking Loxley, a 14-year-old Anghault-Saxon stallion owned by Cheryl Olsten, for a forward, relaxed, rhythmic trot while I look ahead to find the best place to show it off.

# FINESSE YOUR FLAT CLASS

At-home practice is key to a winning performance in the under-saddle class.

**By Amanda Steege with Tricia Conahan**  
**Photos by Amy K. Dragoo**

If you hang around horse shows long enough, you'll hear this comment ring-side: "You can't beat that daisy-cutter. He's going to win this flat class." But the truth is you don't always have to have the best mover to be competitive in the under-saddle class. Most judges are looking for the whole package: a horse who has good movement but is also obedient, alert, sound and has good manners. Does your horse look like he is a pleasure to ride? Are his ears up? Are his gaits balanced and his transitions smooth? How well you present your horse to demonstrate these details can have a tremendous impact on the judge's ultimate decision.

Even if you're not aiming for a blue ribbon, doing your best in the under-saddle class is growing more important. Some of our top horse shows have transitioned from four to three jumping classes in a division. This makes the

flat class all the more influential. Sometimes just being able to get a fifth- or sixth-place ribbon on the flat can give you the points needed to bring home the tricolor. So even if you don't ride the absolute best mover, learning to show off your horse on the flat is a valuable competition skill.

In this article I'll share some exercises to practice refining your flattening skills at home. Then I'll offer a few tips for making the most of your ride at the actual competition. Together, these critical tools can help you optimize your chances in a flat class, regardless of whether or not your horse is the best mover on the planet. They'll help you and your horse stand out from the pack—and maybe even beat that daisy-cutter!



## About Amanda Steege

Growing up, **Amanda Steege** was never far from a horse. Her parents were horse professionals and owners of Red Acre Farm, in Stow, Massachusetts. At a very young age, Amanda would frequently be placed on top of one of the school horses in its stall to keep her safe while her father, Mitch, completed his barn chores.

As a Junior, Amanda campaigned her Small Junior Hunter, One In A Million (aka Spanky), to great success. Coached by her father and Bill Cooney (and still riding Spanky), Amanda won the 1991 Massachusetts Medal Finals and competed in the Medal and Maclay Finals in the following two years. She graduated magna cum laude from Boston College and started her own business, Ashmeadow Farm, in 2001.

Amanda has been the World Champion Hunter Rider for the northeast region for the last seven consecutive years. She and her clients have won numerous championships at Devon, the Hampton Classic, Middleburg Classic and the Indoor circuit. She runs her farm with her boyfriend of 14 years, Tim Delovich, splitting time between Ocala, Florida, and Califon, New Jersey.

## Exercise 1: Mock Flat Class

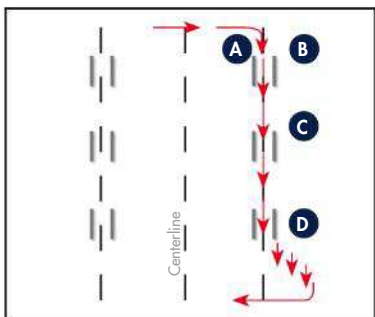


In my pretend under-saddle class, I enter the ring and immediately look for the “judge” standing outside the rail. Then I ask Loxley to head down the quarterline toward her in a nice balanced trot.



As the mock class progresses, I repeatedly look toward the judge to check where I am in her field of view.

## Exercise 2: Maximize the Quarterline



Place a series of poles on the ground to build a chute along each quarterline.

- A. Make an early, balanced turn
- B. Straighten before entering the chute
- C. Stay even in your seat, legs and reins
- D. Leg-yield to the rail



After making a smooth turn to the quarterline, I straighten Loxley and look down the track through the center of each pair of poles.



I maintain this straightness all the way down the chute by staying even in my seat, legs and rein contact.



As we exit the chute, I leg-yield back to the rail by closing my inside leg and opening my outside hand a bit while keeping a slight inside bend.



If your horse doesn't move off your leg when you ask for leg-yield, tap him with your crop behind your leg.



Next, I repeat the exercise at the canter, asking Loxley to move off my inside leg as we exit the chute. Having practiced this already at the walk and trot, he is happy to oblige!





**Next, I ask my judge to stand in the center of the ring, so I can fine-tune my awareness of her in that location, asking Loxley to perform his best when I sense her eyes on me.**

## Stand Still!

One simple skill you can tackle at home is training your horse to stand nicely in the line. Take breaks in the middle of your rides and ask him to stand in the center of the arena. Keep some peppermints in your pocket and reward him when he stands quietly. Gradually, over many sessions, lengthen the amount of time you ask him to stand still.

## Stage a Mock Flat Class

Nothing beats practice. A great way to rehearse the show-ring scenario is to stage a mock under-saddle class at home with five or six friends. This is a terrific opportunity to see how your horse will behave in company and for you to practice your hack-class technique. Designate one of your friends to be the judge, standing in a typical judge location and calling out instructions to the riders.

In under-saddle classes it is important to get seen early and often and by yourself. To do that, you must know where the judge is and where you should be in relation to him to be best seen. The most common places for a judge to stand for a hack class are in the center of the ring or just outside of the ring (usually in a judge's box on the long side of the ring). Practice simulating both those possibilities in your mock class.

You also need to recognize the places in the ring where you can make adjustments that perhaps you'd rather the judge *not* see (shorten your reins, balance your horse, etc.). Practicing this in your mock class—both from the rider's and judge's perspective—will make a big difference.

Start with your judge standing on the side of the ring outside the rail. Give your horse a short warm-up first to make sure he is paying attention. Then start the class just as you would at a show, entering the ring through the in-gate. As you do so, tracking to the left (as all flat classes begin), practice putting your eyes on the judge. Notice where she is looking. The best place for

you to be seen is usually on the quarterline—the track on the long side of the ring midway between its center and the rail—and, in competition, ideally with no other horse around you. So pick up a nice trot immediately, then ride down the quarterline with your horse in balance, setting an even, consistent pace.

After you pass the judge and enter the corner, realize that this is where she can see you the least. It's a good place to make any necessary adjustments. Ask your judge to call out when you pass out of her normal peripheral line of sight (as if she were watching other horses on the quarterline) and again when you come back into her natural zone of attention.

Next, have your judge move to the center of the ring and repeat both steps of the exercise. Where in the ring can she see you best and least? Note that in a real class you might choose either the quarterline or the outside track, depending on the amount of horse traffic.

During this mock flat-class session, take turns playing judge. Get off your horse and stand on the side of the ring, pretending you are judging the other people riding. Take note of where you can see them well. Hold both arms out in a V shape to frame your optimal sight zone. Then identify your blind spots: Where can't you see? Next, try this from the judging position in the center of the ring. Putting yourself in the judge's shoes will teach you a lot about what he sees and when he sees it.

## Maximize the Quarterline

In a hack class, you want to maximize your time on the quarterlines of the ring, with your horse straight from his nose to his tail for as many strides as you can. To do this, you need to execute the corners correctly. Here's a great exercise for practicing that:

Place a chute of poles on the ground along each quarterline of the ring. How many poles you use and how far apart you space them depends on the size of your ring. You may want to put one pair of poles at each end of the quarterline, then another set in the middle to create a straight chute that you can identify visually.

You can begin this exercise at the trot, but if you have difficulties, go back to the walk until both you and your horse have mastered the basics. Start by tracking right. Trot through the corner with an active, engaged pace, bending your horse slightly to the inside. As you exit the corner, make the early turn toward the chute of poles by opening your inside right rein and using your outside left leg to push your horse over. Be careful not to lean in on this turn.

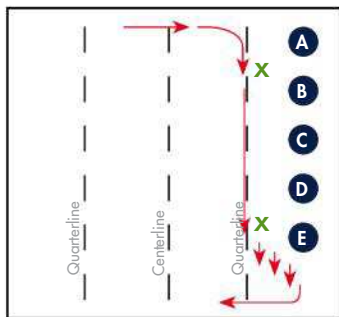
Once you are on the quarterline, your goal is to have your horse as straight as possible. Use two reins and two legs evenly to drive him straight down the chute of poles. Make sure you are sitting evenly in the saddle so he can stay evenly balanced as well.

Aim to leave the quarterline and get back to the rail just before you approach the next corner. As you exit the chute, move your horse to the rail by asking him to leg-yield to the left. Use your inside (right) leg to push him left while keeping a slight

## Exercise 3: Show off Your Horse's Movement

To practice lengthening the trot down the quarterline, I set up a marker on either end of it (X), then add a pair of ground poles to help me double-check my straightness.

- A. Make an early balanced turn
- B. Close legs and hip angle, soften reins
- C. Maintain trot lengthening to second marker
- D. Sit tall, close fingers on reins and collect stride
- E. Leg-yield to rail



After making a smooth balanced turn onto the quarterline, I straighten Loxley. Then as we pass the marker, I close my legs to ask him to lengthen his stride.

inside bend with your right rein and opening your outside (left) rein a bit. This will get you back out to the rail just before you enter the corner, and that will set you on the best track to navigate the next quarterline.

If your horse doesn't move off your leg, try using more pressure or move your leg back an inch or two to get a better reaction, still keeping your heel down. You can also use a little tap with the crop behind your leg. Keep your leg on the horse at the same time you tap. Remember: The crop backs up your leg; it doesn't replace it.

Once you have mastered this exercise in both directions, try it at canter. Use the same aids at all gaits.

### Show off Your Horse's Movement

To show off your horse's trot, ask him to lengthen his stride down the quarterlines, then collect and rebalance him on the corners. Practicing this at home will teach him to do this seamlessly while responding to your body position as part of the aids. Place an object—a cone, flowerpot, etc.—at the beginning of the quarterline and another at the end to mark where to make your transitions.

To practice this exercise, pick up a normal trot and ride through the corner just as you did in the quarterline exercise. Your horse should be balanced and ahead of your leg. As you track onto the quarterline, relax your biceps, thinking of your arms being elastic. Close your hip angle slightly and add some leg. You are asking for just a small step up in speed, but you want your horse to visibly extend his stride, relax his neck and lengthen his frame from nose to tail.

Your goal is to keep this frame from the moment you enter the quarterline until the moment you leave it to enter the next corner. This is your horse's opportunity to shine!

At the end of the quarterline, stretch back up with your shoulders over your hips and return to a slightly deeper seat. Keep squeezing with your legs, close your fingers on the reins and ask your horse to slow his gait and shorten his frame. Continue posting. Once he has collected his stride, begin your leg-yield back to the rail.

Some horses get strung out or on their forehead riding the

length of the ring. Practicing this collection in the corners presents an ideal opportunity to rebalance your horse. You can do it at all three gaits.

### Do Your Pre-Class Prep

With all of this homework under your belt, you should feel more prepared to perform your best in the ring. Keep in mind that presentation really counts. Your horse should be well-groomed with tight braids and a clean, white, properly fitted saddle pad. Your clothes should fit well and your boots should be polished to a high sheen. You both should look like you are "in it to win it."

As you plan the rest of your hack-class strategy, think through all the details that will play a role in your success, including your warm-up. Get on at least 15 minutes before your class to warm up your horse in the schooling area, especially if it's the first class of the day. Just do a little walk, trot, canter; loosen up his muscles and make sure he is in front of your leg.

Before you enter the ring, notice where the judge is standing and decide what you will do during the first few minutes as the class fills. You can't control the size of the class or who you compete against. But you can control, to some extent, the picture that the judge sees. So plan your strategy ahead of time.

### Connect with the Judge

Once you're in the ring, the first thing to realize is that it's not the judge's job to discover you; it's *your* job to present your horse to the judge. Especially in a crowded flat class, judges are looking for the winner the second you walk in the gate, long before the class has filled. So use that opportunity to get seen early and by yourself.

Try to make a few passes by the judge at your horse's best



**2** I soften my rein contact and close my hip angle slightly to encourage him to move forward freely, demonstrating a beautiful balanced trot in the relaxed frame that judges love to see.

gait to create a great first impression.

Once the class has started, look for opportunities to be seen by the judge when your horse is at his best and to minimize the view of him when you are correcting or rebalancing his gaits.

Remember that in a hunter hack class the judge is looking for light contact with your horse's mouth. That means the tight frame used in equitation classes is not appropriate. Get your horse in a balanced gait with impulsion, then soften your hands and let him stretch his neck out a little bit. He should feel long from nose to tail and loose in his back. But be cautious not to create a really loose, loopy rein; there should still be light contact with your horse's mouth.

In a typical flat class, you will be asked to walk, trot and canter in both directions. (The U.S. Equestrian Federation rules also permit the judge to call for a hand gallop, but that is rarely requested these days.) But this is not Simon Says—it is more important to do a nice transition than to do it immediately. You can take up to four or five steps to prepare your horse for a smooth up or down transition. And in a crowded ring, sometimes waiting those few seconds can help put more space between your horse and the one ahead of you. So take your time and plan it out.

Keep thinking! If your horse is not behaving or is not in the correct balance or pace, consider avoiding the quarterline and instead find your way to the outside track, where you might be somewhat hidden behind another horse while you correct the issue.

When the judge calls to line up, try to end up in the center of the line, once again making sure that the judge can easily find you. Sometimes the judge is scrambling to pin the class at the end. So this is another opportunity to be seen—or at least not forgotten—before he makes a final decision! 🐾



**3** When we reach the marker at the end of the quarterline, I stretch my upper body tall over my hips, sit slightly deeper in the saddle and close my fingers on the reins while still squeezing my legs to ask him to collect his stride before initiating the leg-yield.

## Don't Undermine the Trot

Trying too hard at the trot is a common mistake in hack classes. Sometimes you will see a rider ask the horse to lengthen the trot by using a heavy driving seat with an open hip angle. But the driving seat is counterproductive, as it can make the horse lift his head and drop his back, which creates a quick, choppy step rather than the desired long, loose step. And if the rider lands too heavily in the post, it can make the horse crabby or pin his ears.

To address this, do lots of work at home in the two-point position. This will give you the leg strength necessary to keep the right position even with a horse who is reluctant to go forward. Then, when you return to normal posting trot, use the same position for the "up" part of your post as when you were in two-point, especially when asking your horse to lengthen his stride. When he goes forward, you want him to stretch his neck out and down, reach up through his back and take a nice step through his shoulder. Being light in the saddle will allow him to do this.

When you come "down" in your post, slide your hips back in the saddle an inch or two and slightly close your hip angle. Think of landing in your thigh and heel, not letting yourself land heavily in the saddle.



Samantha Cohen and Billy Olive successfully navigate the water jump that gave so many riders trouble during the mock Nations Cup at the George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session.

# CONQUERING THE WATER

Olympic veteran McLain Ward led an impromptu lesson on how to jump water during the George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session.

**By Jocelyn Pierce ■ Photos by Amy K. Dragoo**

**T**he morning did not go the way many of the young riders envisioned. The 12 riders participating in the three-day George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session were being put to their final test by riding in a mock Nations Cup competition. Headlining the quasi-competition, two-time Olympic show-jumping gold medalist McLain Ward began the day by walking Conrad Homfeld's course with the participants and later offered insightful feedback on horse and rider after each round. Just as in a CSIO Nations Cup, the three teams of four riders would jump two rounds over the same course. The highest score from each round would be discarded and the three best scores from each round would be totaled for a team score to determine the winner.

But halfway through the first round it was clear that many of the riders were struggling with Fence 7—the water jump. Runouts, stops and even falls plagued the riders, adding a sense of dread as each new rider cantered through the timers to start her round. Soon the focus of the day was not on which team would win, but instead on who could make it over the water.

Chefs d' Equipe Anne Kursinski, Beezie Madden and Kent Farrington—all Olympians—each gave their team expert instruction and preparation before heading into the arena to be surveyed by McLain, the 2017 World Cup



Olympic gold medalist McLain Ward walks Conrad Homfeld's course with the 12 participants.



McLain had praise for Caitlyn Connors, who showed a lot of composure during her rounds, even when she lost her stirrup at the beginning of her second trip aboard Express Blue GP Du Bois Madame.

counting on me ...” he trailed off. “I think that’s a big mistake. You weren’t able to reprimand that horse appropriately and get into him. That’s not a riding error, that’s a preparation error.”

Kendra Duggleby also didn’t make it past the water and McLain pointed to her plan of attack as the problem. He admitted that she rode the beginning of her course well but noted that her lack of preparation before beginning her round contributed to her elimination at the water. “You never pulled up and got yourself organized before you started,” McLain said. “You went right from the trot to the canter and then right to the first jump, which is a sign of anxiety. You need to compose yourself more.”

He explained that her problems on course began at Fence 5, the wall, where the horse was backing off a bit. While he praised Kendra for riding it well with a good deep seat, he said that should have been a red flag to wake up the horse because she had a solid hedge fence coming next, followed by the water. “You got the hedge over done and then you started to ride at the water and you changed your mind,” explained McLain. “You did a pretty strong half-halt and as soon as you did the half-halt, he was out of the situation. Then, to my point—the reason why I make the point about your entrance—is your plan of attack the second time around was not well thought out. You came off the right blind,

**TIP**  
In your competition warm-up, have a game plan and believe in your game plan.

champion. In addition to his remarks on how to school the water jump, McLain focused on having a plan and effective

of making the practice fences count. “It’s better to have a few good ones than a lot of bad ones,” he said, echoing Kent Farrington’s sentiment in his gymnastics session the previous day about jumping the horse the least amount possible to achieve the desired result. “You don’t just keep jumping and jumping until something goes wrong. If your horse feels good and he’s paying attention and you feel confident, you’ve got to go with that,” McLain continued.

## Preparation is Key

Riders had access to a large schooling area outside the main arena, but McLain and Conrad requested that two more warm-up fences be put at the end of the main ring so McLain could comment on how the chefs, trainers and riders used that area to prepare themselves.

“The warm-up is such an important part of our success in the ring,” McLain said. “It’s a place that should be calm, organized; you should have a game plan. You’ve got to believe in your game plan, and everything you do in the schooling area should be in mind with trying to set your horse up the best way you can for the test at hand.”

McLain also stressed the importance

“The warm-up is such an important part of our success in the ring ... Everything you do in the schooling area should be in mind with trying to set your horse up the best way you can for the test at hand.” —McLain Ward

First to go in the order, Olivia Woodson had two refusals at the water and was eliminated. McLain told Olivia that the horse was behind her leg and she didn’t have enough impulsion to the water. He also scolded her for not carrying a whip. “I’m not a believer that you have to have a whip and spurs with every horse, but myself—if I had seen that water jump in this ring in a team competition where other people are

short turn. I would’ve gotten the horse up in that corner. I would’ve given him a crack with the whip behind the saddle and I would’ve given myself the best approach possible to get over that water jump. The way you approached the water the second time was a clear sign of not being organized in your brain. It wasn’t a riding error; you just didn’t think it through clearly. That showed itself in your entrance.”



**Riding Bon Vivant, McKayla Langmeier had two solid rounds and McLain compared her demeanor and riding style to Olympian Beezie Madden's.**

Much as he had with Kendra, McLain pointed to Delaney Flynn's lack of preparation as the cause of her elimination at the water. McLain said he wasn't surprised the riders were struggling to get over the fence because they weren't reacting effectively to the stop and setting themselves to get over it on the second try. "No one addressed the horse properly when he stopped," he explained. "Use the whip appropriately behind the saddle. Get them moving forward. It's OK to make a mistake. The bigger point is to react to the mistake."

## **Position, Position, Position**

Natalie Dean had two solid rounds with no major errors. McLain praised her for overcoming the pressure of having to get a clean round because her teammate had been eliminated, but offered a word of caution on her upper-body position. "You're a tall girl so you have to be a little bit aware of your upper body in the air," McLain said. "Some places it was excellent, like the triple combination, where you just stayed in the middle like a gymnastic. A couple places you tried to catch up, like at the plank. That's not necessary. Stay in the middle, let that horse come up to you," he said. He also suggested she watch riders

## **Anne Kursinski: Effective Position**

Five-time Olympian Anne Kursinski taught the flatwork on the first day of the training session. She stressed controlling body position to communicate with the horse effectively and having a better connection to the horse both in the seat and hands.

Anne explained that the rider's whole body influences the horse's whole body to become one unit. "Position, position, position on the flat," Anne said. This will help a rider use her aids correctly, and also at the right moment. "Horses will try to put you in a place that's less effective," she explained. It's up to the rider to have the discipline and awareness to react appropriately.

To improve the riders' connection to the horses, she had them work without stirrups in the walk, trot and canter as well as in lateral movements and transitions. She noted that most of the riders' transitions were better when they didn't have their stirrups to rely on because they were sitting deeper, with a better feel of the horse. She also knotted the riders' reins and had them hold the reins in front of the knot, making them noticeably shorter. "Ride with long arms and short reins," said Anne. This allowed riders to feel a better connection through the bridle and keep their hands steady.

Correct body awareness and position are so much of what makes a rider successful, Anne said, citing examples of greats like Beezie Madden and McLain Ward. "Things happen more quickly and efficiently when a rider is connected," Anne explained, adding that when you sit in the right place and use your hands and legs correctly, it should feel like you are one with the horse and the horse is reading your mind. "You don't see the top riders pulling and pushing and yee-hawing and hauling, and that's where it becomes a real art," she said.

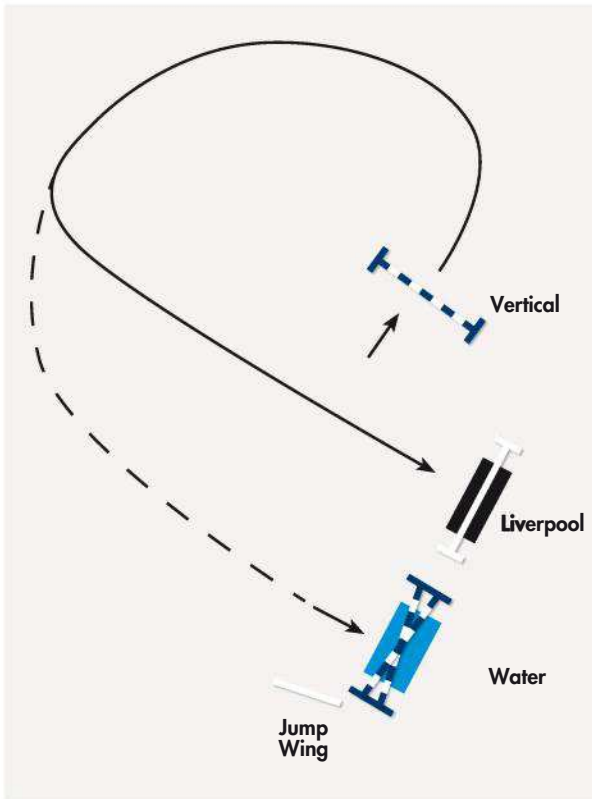
who have a tall upper body so that should could emulate them.

After Alexandra Piolet's double-clear round McLain explained she needed to focus on improving her lower-leg position if she wanted to continue up the levels. "Ninety percent of your problems stem from your lower leg not being connected to your horse," he said. "I think you have a nice feeling for the horse and the stride. That [lower-leg] weakness will decide how far you will go. If you can get the lower leg connected where it makes your position more solid and you can support your horse more and stay in the middle, you can go a long way," he encouraged. "If you don't get that better as the jumps get bigger, it's going to rear its ugly head."

When Cecily Hayes, who was riding an unfamiliar, green horse, was also eliminated

at the water, McLain zeroed in on the lack of connection to the horse. "Whether the horse is being bad or good or green or inexperienced or just a bummer, again as I said to some of the earlier riders, you guys shouldn't be losing your stirrups," McLain said. "You've got to expect that this is coming. They've shown that to you in the first round. You're losing your stirrups—that's not OK. You can work through the horse's problems or greenness, but your position, your connection to the horse, shouldn't be compromised in that situation. If I know it's coming, they're not going to get me off."

Overall, McLain thought Samatha Cohen put in two good rounds, but he told her she needed to make sure she was staying connected and not pulling on the left rein and then the right rein. He blamed her lack of connection as the reason why



McLain shortened the width of the water, made the vertical rails on top of it into a crossrail, positioned the ferns on the side into a welcoming V-shaped chute and added a wing on the right side to help prevent runouts. The shallow liverpool fence that the riders had all successfully jumped was placed to the left side of the water jump.

her horse swapped his leads. “Try to keep it more like one unit and the horse will stay smoother,” he said. (For more on the importance of rider position, see the sidebar on page 29 about Anne Kursinski’s day of flatwork during the training session.)

## Credit Where Credit Is Due

In addition to the critiques, McLain was quick to praise. Second to go in the order, Caitlyn Connors rode an impressive first round and set the tone for the other competitors. “That was a great round. You came in very organized, determined, in control,” McLain noted. After her second flawless trip, McLain applauded Caitlyn. “I noticed in both rounds your composure,” he said. “The first round, you knew your horse, you knew his scope. This round, you lost your stirrup after the second jump and you never lost your cool through that turn. You took a moment, you got your stirrup

back. It was a mistake, but it showed great composure. I see a composure and a ring presence that’s beyond your years and I commend you on that.” McLain also gave kudos to McKayla Langmeier, whom he said was “a strong rider without pushing the horse through the fence,” and compared her demeanor to the horses and her riding style to Beezie’s. “Even if she’s upset with something, it doesn’t come through in her communication with the horse and you see the horses respond well,” McLain said about Beezie and noted that McKayla’s horse seemed to be gaining confidence as he went. He continued that it was important to always analyze your ride and ask, “Is my horse getting better, is he gaining in confidence or is he getting worse?”

## Schooling the Water

At the end of the Nations Cup, McLain worked with five of the riders who didn’t make it beyond the water in either round. “Kids will treat the water like any other fence and it’s not,” McLain acknowledged. “It’s a natural fence. You have to be more defensive.”

McLain also stressed that a horse should never run out to the left or right and the rider should be stronger to keep him straight to the fence. “When they run outside the



McLain watches as Kendra Duggleby and Silver Lining jump the water successfully during his impromptu training session after the Nations Cup.

side, you’re opening a door,” he said. “If I’m riding a horse or Beezie is riding a horse that stops at the water, I guarantee you that horse is not going to run by one way or the other. He might stop at it but he’s not running by the side.”

McLain shortened the width of the water, made the vertical rails on top of it into a crossrail, positioned the ferns on the side into a welcoming V-shaped chute and added a wing on the right side to help prevent runouts. He also moved the shallow liverpool fence that the riders had all successfully jumped on course to the left side of the water jump.

The riders were instructed to jump a single vertical to get the horses thinking



McLain was impressed with Natalie Dean, riding Dylandra. She overcame the pressure of having to get a clean round because her teammate had been eliminated, but her upper-body position caused McLain to offer a word of caution.





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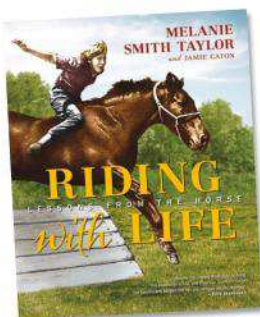
Sara McCloskey was commended for managing Calumpi's big stride, but McLain noted that she could work on her position and making her rounds smoother.

forward and then come around on the right lead to the liverpool on a long approach, much like the approach in the Nations Cup course. Once they had successfully jumped the vertical followed by the liverpool two to three times, McLain instructed the riders to again jump the vertical but instead of coming to the liverpool, they were to jump the water.

"This is how I would school the water with a horse that's a little nervous about it," McLain later explained. "I give a very mild presentation of the water with the liverpool so that the horse can't get in trouble and gains confidence." Once the horse is comfortable, McLain would pilot him to the water instead. "The horse goes right over the water before he realizes it wasn't the liverpool."

When a few of the riders leaned forward and released one stride from the takeoff, McLain stressed the need to stay in a defensive position. "Sit down and stay behind the motion," he called.

Each of the five riders jumped it on the first attempt in McLain's exercise. "You have to understand how to get your horse over water. You have to understand what we just practiced," McLain explained to the group. Finally, his closing remarks were words of encouragement: "You have to walk away from this experience knowing you were all able to conquer this water—it didn't beat you." 🏆



## Riding with Life: Lessons from the Horse by Melanie Smith Taylor

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Out on the trail Cash indicates he's aware of the dogs with his alert expression even before they start barking. My leg and rein contact give the 9-year-old gelding confidence that it's OK to pass the dogs. I've been incorporating trail work into Cash's training since the gelding was imported from Europe at age 5. Since then, I've campaigned him up to 1.4 meters and Cash is now being competed by new owner Anne Cole in the 1.2-meter division. For more on handling dogs on the trail, turn to page 40.



# TRAINING ON THE

# TRAIL

Build trust and bust boredom on a non-arena path that contributes to show-ring success.

**By Lane Clarke ■ Photos by Kim F. Miller**

**A**t school there's a reason they don't teach math or social studies for the whole day. You can pack in only so much of the same thing at one time. I feel strongly that the same idea applies to training horses. I've seen great benefits from varying the exercises and environment in which I work with the horses in our jumper-oriented training program, whether they're young and green or horses I'm riding at the grand prix level.

As a rider and trainer, I like to have a varied training approach because it gives me the benefit of looking at my horse from several angles and in different situations and that helps me understand him better.

In addition to typical arena schooling, I work horses in-hand, on the longe line, in long lines, loose in the round pen and out on the trail. Among those, trail riding is a particular favorite and one I recommend to almost all riders, provided they have the basic level of compe-

## About Lane Clarke

**Lane Clarke** is partners with trainer Mickey Hayden in Hayden Clarke Sport Horses in Southern California's Laguna Hills. He was born in Australia and moved to the U.S. as a toddler with his family. Lane's father, Allen Clarke, is a horseman renowned for success with young horses and problem horses. Lane's mother, Meredith, and brother, Lyn, are farriers.

Under his father's tutelage, Lane attained success in the jumper ranks as a junior and came to the attention of Mickey, who had equal appreciation for Lane's ability and his work ethic. Lane began as a working student, earned a paid-assistant post as a teenager and was made a partner in the business in January 2017. Along the way, he has coached students and campaigned horses up to grand prix. Recent major placings include winning the \$75,000 HITS Coachella Desert Circuit Grand Prix and finishing third in the \$100,000 Longines FEI World Cup™ Thermal qualifier in 2017.

His emphasis on variety in training horses reflects what he learned from his father and from Mickey, mixed with personal experiences. Lane, 33, and his wife, equine veterinarian Jennifer Reese Clarke, DVM, have a 3-year-old daughter, Emerson.

## In the Arena

Trail rides often include a few scary situations, so it's imperative for your horse to listen to your aids and trust you as his leader, no matter where you are. To start gaining those qualities, you begin trail-ride training in the arena.



A large barbecue cover stretched over the arena rail and a jump component created an opportunity for me to reinforce Cash's response to the aids. Initially, he had been a tad frightened by the setup so, working in an area away from the scary object, I used my legs to make sure Cash was forward-thinking into yielding hands. This got his focus back on to me. Gradually, I've moved Cash closer to the object, bending him to make sure he continues to pay more attention to me than the obstacle.

tence and security in the saddle to do so safely.

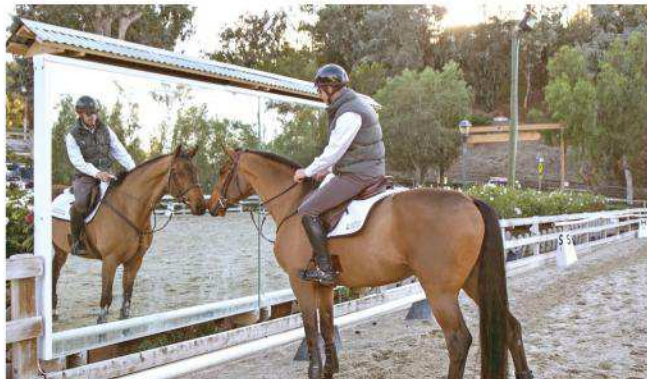
Because trail rides often include a few scary situations—at least from the horse's perspective—teaching your horse that he needs to listen to your aids and trust you as his leader, no matter where you are, can help. Both of those behaviors translate to more responsiveness in the arena and a better bond with your horse. In addition, the change of scenery that comes anytime you get out of the arena is a great mental break for both of you.

The many physical benefits of riding on the trail start with your horse learning to balance himself on different types of terrain and going up and down hills. Or I should say *relearning* to do these things. Horses are incredibly agile on their feet if we allow them to be. They weren't meant to go on only perfectly manicured footing. Think of wild horses galloping at full speed across the desert or over rocky plains.

Of course, if they're not used to riding on different terrain, it

takes a while for them to gain that agility and their proprioception—their sense of where their feet and the rest of their body parts are in relation to the terrain. When they improve their natural agility, it really helps their ability to adjust to anything that comes up on a tricky course or to recover from a misstep.

Walking and trotting up hills is great for building hindquarter



Cash doesn't normally work in the mirrored dressage ring, so he initially looked at the mirror. As I did with the barbecue cover, I first worked in an area away from the mirror, making sure Cash's attention stayed on me. We gradually worked closer to it until we were calmly walking next to it. Now I'm giving him plenty of time to touch the mirror and get comfortable with it. Rushing this process defeats the purpose of having the horse learn that he can trust you not to lead him to something that's unsafe.

muscles that propel a horse's engaged work on the flat and his takeoff over fences. And there's no better way to understand an "uphill" and "downhill" frame of carriage than actually riding your horse up and down a hill. It doesn't have to be a steep hill to give you a clear sense for how it feels when your horse is in that desired uphill frame versus the on-the-forehand sensation of riding downhill.

When you go to places like Spruce Meadows in Calgary or any derby field where part of the course is set on a slight incline or decline, you'd be surprised how a little bit of up- or downhill changes the balance. Often it's enough to throw the horse and/or the rider off of their distance to an upcoming fence or put the rider into a precarious position in the saddle.

I usually mix up periods of loose work and collected work while out on the trail. The loose work enables the horse to stretch his head and neck, although my contact is never so loose that I'd lose control if something startled him. In collected work, I'll have the horse a little bit framed up to work on engagement and muscle development. I usually include walking and trotting and sometimes the canter on a long, flat stretch.

On a weekly basis, most of our horses get at least one trail ride; two is good and three times is great. Fitness trail rides that emphasize strong hill and collection work are never done on back-to-back days because the horse's muscles need time to recover. I wouldn't do more than three fitness trail rides in a week, but I might get in more trail work by using a short trail ride as a warm-up to whatever we're going to work on in the arena—say 10 or 15 minutes of light work on the trail in place of flatwork in the ring.

### TIP

School your horse in part of the ring that's away from the scary object, then let him rest near it so it becomes a place of sanctuary.

## Figure out His Bubble

In our program, a beginner rider never goes out on the trail until she's established a solid seat at all gaits. Her first of many rides outside the arena are on a horse who's very comfortable on a trail. When an experienced rider comes to us with her own horse, I take the horse on a trail ride first before I encourage them to go out.

If you or your horse are not experienced with trail rides or you are concerned about coping with unfamiliar scenarios outside the ring, you'll want to start slowly by introducing him to unfamiliar objects in the arena and progressively work your way outside of it.

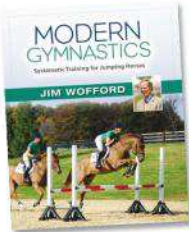
As you ride, think about what concerns your horse. Fear is an interesting thing. I have one horse who is afraid of sprinklers and nothing else. Another horse won't jump over a liverpool with a blue liner but has no problem going over one with a red liner. Pretty soon, you'll start being able to guess what your horse is afraid of. Just as if you had a friend who didn't like the chair lifts at a ski resort, you can probably guess she won't like an elevator. With enough experience and exposure, you can start to determine what is going to be a problem for your horse.

Unfamiliar objects in the arena include anything that's new to your horse. Be creative. Throw a tarp over a fence rail, put a banner on the arena wall, pile some orange traffic cones in the middle of the ring or stack jump poles in the corner.

Strategies that are able to help your horse overcome his fear of something foreign include:

- School him in part of the ring that's away from the scary object or area, then let him rest near it so it becomes a place of sanctuary.

As you're working him a safe distance from whatever he's afraid of, ignore that spooky thing and encourage him to listen to your leg. If he speeds up, slows down or shies away in response to the scary object, your primary focus needs to be about him responding to



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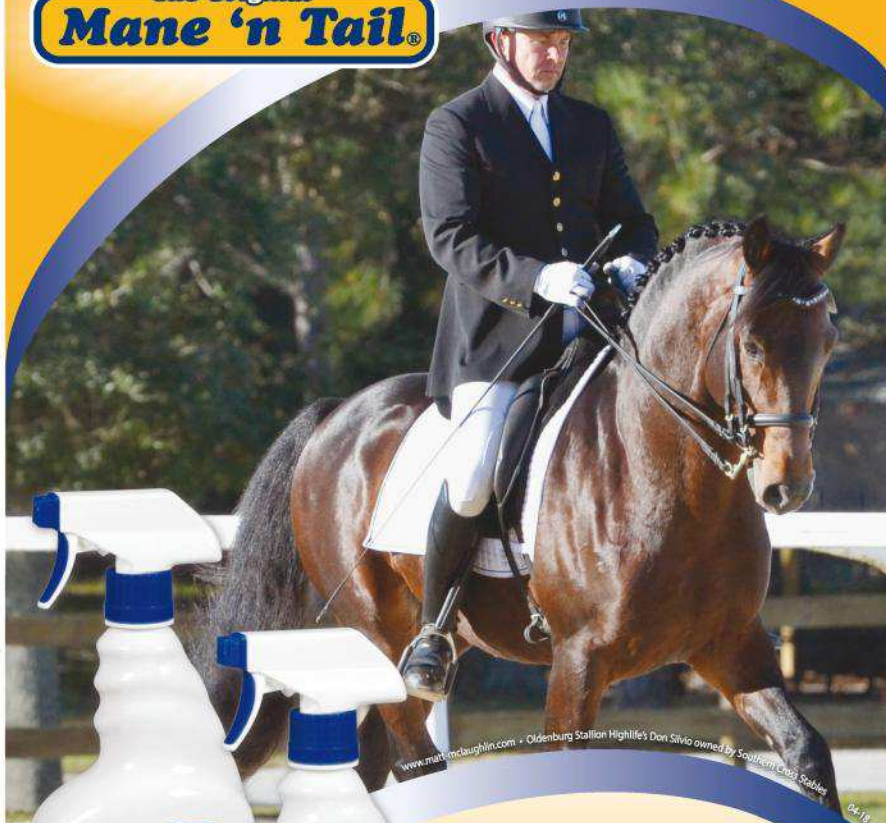
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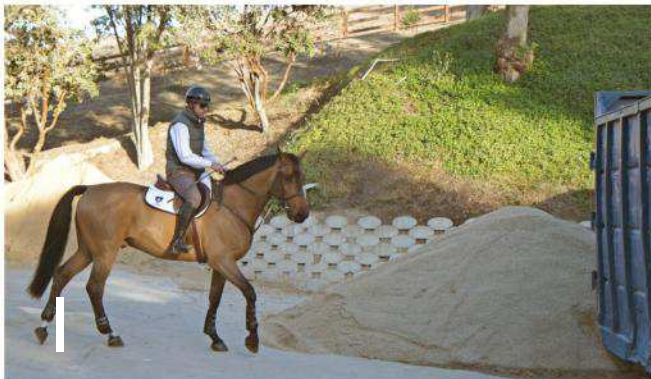
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## Around the Stable

Once your horse is comfortable approaching unfamiliar objects in the arena, you can use the same process to introduce him to scary scenarios around your barn.



The dumpster is not always on the property. As we approach it, Cash's raised head and tense muscles indicate he is close to his "bubble"—how much he can tolerate a spooky situation before he reacts negatively.



I add my legs, squeezing more with my inside leg, and use an indirect inside rein to bend Cash's head away from the dumpster. Rein and leg contact can be the equivalent of an adult's assuring hand leading a frightened child across the street: "I know you're scared, but we're doing this." Though Cash is still worried, you can tell by his ears that he's focused on me.



Cash has just about decided he's comfortable with the dumpster, but I still squeeze him a little more with my legs into my reins to make sure his focus stays on me. My right leg is farther back than the left to keep Cash's haunches from swinging away from the dumpster. And I still have slightly more feel on the inside rein to keep his attention on me.

edge of his comfort zone. Tense muscles and a raised head are often the early signs of your horse forming his bubble. The next sign may be an unwillingness to move forward. You're still OK at that point, but when you sense that he's going from being alert and tuned in to you to wanting to turn and run away, he's showing you his edge. That's when you need to let your horse move away from the scary thing. Go to another part of the ring and do a little bit of complicated schooling work to focus his mind on you and away from the object until he softens his demeanor, both physically and mentally. He'll show this to you by lowering his head, relaxing his muscles and being willing to go forward. Then address the spooky item again.

### Take It to the Trail

When your horse is comfortable approaching unfamiliar or spooky objects in the arena, you can start to do the same thing outside the arena. Introduce him to the idea of trail riding by riding him anywhere safe around the stable grounds. At my barn,

your aids in an appropriate manner, not about the object. When your horse stays on the aids, you can gradually move him closer to the fearful thing.

- Walk beside or around the object rather than over it.
- Have another horse—provided they are buddies—approach the object just ahead of your horse.

Throughout this part of your ride, work on understanding your horse. This includes knowing what I call his "bubble" of how much fear he can tolerate in a situation that scares him. I call it a "bubble" because that perimeter has a little bit of flexibility and if you push it too quickly or too far, it will pop.

Every horse's bubble is different, and you have to allow your horse to show you where his bubble is by getting him to the

### Maintain His Trust

Whatever it is that your horse is afraid of, the solution lies in your ability to maintain his trust and the connection between your leg and hand so that he is willing to go where you take him. It's your job to never put him in a situation where he will not be safe. Once your horse realizes that, he's going to realize it's OK to go where you ask him. Of course, it is never worth putting your horse or yourself in legitimate danger to train him.



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## On the Trail

Once your horse is comfortable approaching unfamiliar objects outside the arena, you can start taking him out on the trail. I use a permanent set of trail obstacles are at the Nellie Gail Ranch equestrian community in Orange County's Laguna Hills.



Riding on the trail teaches your horse learn to balance himself on different types of terrain and going up and down hills, which will allow him adjust to any misstep on tricky courses. This short, steep hill with loose footing helps me ensure that Cash is listening to my aids. I shift my weight back to stay over his center of gravity and keep a soft feel of his mouth, letting him figure out where to put his feet.



Small logs and the slight drop of a retaining wall on the trail, approached at the walk, are terrific team-building exercises for us. My solid lower leg and fluid upper-body position allow me to go with an unnecessarily big jump from Cash the first few times down it.



It's rare that a horse is unaware that he's approaching an animal like a dog. When I initially felt Cash's nervous attitude, which he displayed in the photo on page 34, I took a breath and tried to figure out what he was nervous about. I then squeezed with my legs into my soft hand to keep his attention on me.



Cash responds by taking a breath, too, and yielding to the rein pressure by dropping his head. I'll walk him back and forth along the fence line until he is completely comfortable. His relatively calm reaction didn't happen overnight. I've been gradually introducing him to unfamiliar situations for a few years, so he trusts that I won't put him in any danger. That partnership has made us stronger competitors in the show ring.

we have stalls that face the outdoors, so I will walk a young or green horse up and down the row next to the stalls. You can also walk around the property perimeter and as close as you can get to the outbuildings, the manure pile, the tractor shed, the dumpster, etc.

Progress from the least to the most-spooky areas gradually as you did in the arena. Don't march right out there and try to fix your problem. Always make sure he is tuned in to your aids and moving forward.

Once you are confident of keeping your horse's responsiveness to your aids even when he's fearful of something, you're ready to take that skill out on a trail. The unpredictability of things you'll en-

counter on a trail adds to the challenge, but if you have established responsiveness and trust, you should be prepared for it.

Barking dogs are a common encounter. The trails that we have access to weave through a residential neighborhood where dogs often appear at their property's fence line with what can seem like little warning. It's very rare, however, that a horse is unaware of what's coming. Usually you can feel your horse's energy and nervous attitude before the barking begins and the dogs appear.

When you feel that nervous energy, stop, take a breath and figure out why your horse is nervous. It's really important that you exude confidence in whatever command you give at this point. Typically, you would want to put the horse on your leg

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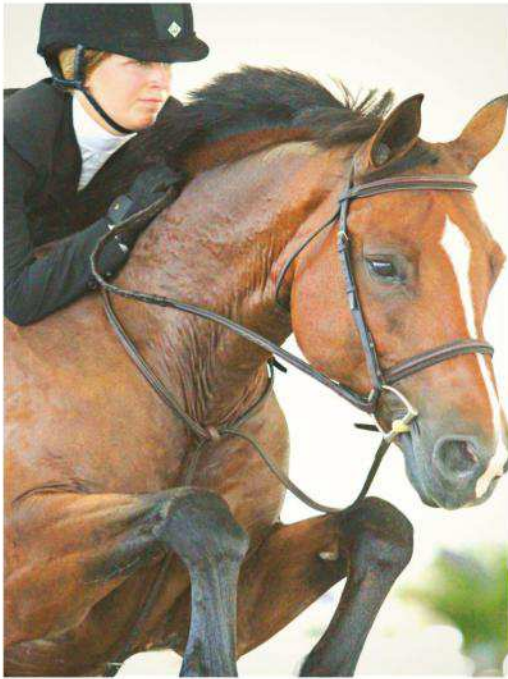
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## Tips for Successful Trail Riding

■ Take realistic stock of your own abilities and what you know and expect about your horse's tolerance for the unpredictable situations that can be common on a trail ride. If you are at all concerned that you might not be able to handle your horse, enlist the help of a professional.

■ For beginners, go out on a trail only when you've established a solid seat at all gaits. Initially, try to go out on a horse who's very comfortable on a trail.

■ A tired horse is usually a relaxed horse, so I almost always recommend tackling the trail on a horse not already accustomed to it after a good, solid workout in the arena.

■ The buddy system can be effective. Many horses react well to having a calm, seasoned trail horse go along and take the lead during the ride. I typically recommend that the other horse have an experienced rider.

and hand aids as you walk back and forth along the fence line separating you from the barking dog, maybe adding a reassuring pat to the neck. People sometimes don't realize that putting a horse on the aids and patting him actually increases his confidence. It's like a parent taking her child's hand to cross the road. You are saying, I understand you are afraid, but this is where we are going.

It's amazing how fast a horse can go from being very afraid of something to



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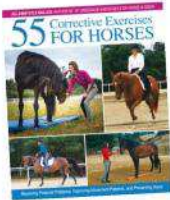
being OK with it. Often, fear of the unknown stays if we don't allow enough time for the horse to assimilate what is actually going on. (This is all assuming the dog is contained in a fenced property. Dealing with an aggressive dog that's loose is a whole different story!)

If you are having trouble with the dogs or anything else that's moving, return to an area he considers safer and find something that's spooky to your horse but is stationary. A water trough, for example, might be frightening, but it's not going to move. In any kind of training, there's always a way to break things down. If you can't jog, you walk. If you can't walk, you crawl. Take things one step at a time and you'll get where you want to go.

For jumper riders especially, try to find little logs to jump over or narrow spaces to go through. Horses tend not to like claustrophobic spaces, so utilizing one is another chance to establish the idea that responding to your aids is more important than what he doesn't like. Our trails include two short tunnels that go under the roads of the stable's Nellie Gail Ranch neighborhood, an equestrian community.

Unusual situations like these often trigger resistance from the horse and they are an opportunity to reinforce the idea that he cannot deny your leg aid. You really miss a training opportunity if your horse balks at something and you decide it doesn't matter because he's not doing that in front of a jump on course. Instead, I see these challenges on a trail as emulating problems that arise on course when a horse is fearful of a specific jump. I think other disciplines have a better understanding that exposing our horses to a variety of situations and environments is a great way to enhance their training for their own sport.

In addition to including variety in your horse's routine while continuing his training and conditioning, trail riding is a great way to simply enjoy time with your horse, which I believe is an important part of good horsemanship. 🐾



## 55 Corrective Exercises for Horses

Author Jec Ballou introduces her latest collection of mounted and unmounted corrective exercises and demonstrates how we can actively work to improve the horse's posture and movement, whether he is an active performance or pleasure mount, an aging or older horse that benefits from gentle exercise, or one being rehabilitated following injury, illness, or lack of conditioning. Her positive cross-training techniques are free of shortcuts, and her guidelines for analyzing the horse's posture and way of going help readers gain a new awareness of the equine body. Hardcover concealed wire-o, 160 pp.

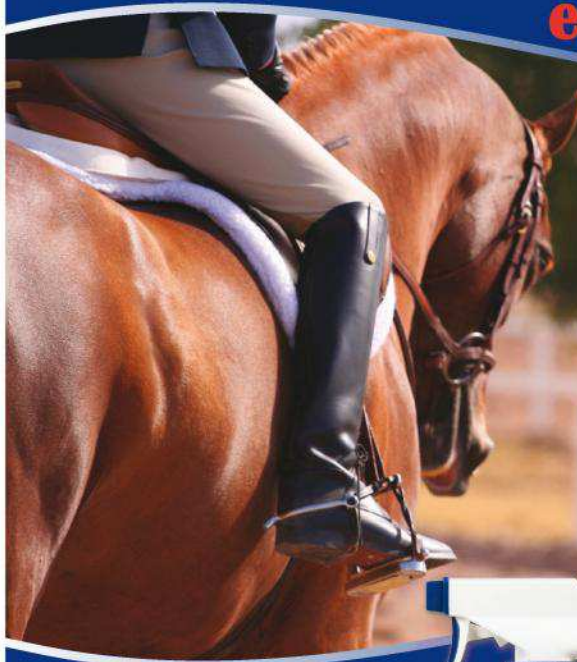
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Gray horses are often susceptible to melanomas, a type of cancerous tumor.

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# EQUINE MELANOMA: HARMLESS BUMP OR TIME BOMB?

Learn how to recognize and treat these common skin tumors.

**By Elaine Pascoe with Chris Byron, DVM, MS, Diplomate ACVS**

**A**lyssa Davidson's gray gelding, Goose, was 13 when she first noticed a dark growth on him. The North Carolina rider didn't recall seeing the lump located on his penis before, but she couldn't be sure it hadn't been there all along. Could it be melanoma, she wondered? How worried should she be?

Melanomas, a type of cancerous tumor, are common in gray horses. If one of these tumors popped up on your skin, you'd rush to the doctor—and rightly so since human melanomas are malignant and can quickly metastasize, spreading to distant sites in the body. But, says Chris Byron, DVM, "Melanomas in gray horses exhibit behavior that is quite different from melanomas in humans." Gray-horse melanomas commonly grow slowly, if at all, for years. They may never metastasize. That doesn't mean they can be ignored, however.

Over time, many of these tumors (more than half, according to some reports) invade surrounding tissues. Sometimes they begin to grow rapidly and multiply, and sometimes they do spread through the body. Here, Dr. Byron, an associate professor of large animal surgery at the Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, Virginia, helps explain what to watch for and when to take action. Melanomas develop in most gray horses as they age, so if your horse is gray you'll likely be facing this problem at some point. About 80 percent of gray horses older than 15 years have at least one of these tumors, some research shows.

Alyssa knew that, and she knew most gray-horse melanomas



COURTESY, ALYSSA DAVIDSON



COURTESY, ALYSSA DAVIDSON

**LEFT:** Alyssa Davidson's gelding, Goose, was 13 years old when she noticed a melanoma on him. Nearly 80 percent of gray horses over the age of 15 have at least one of these tumors.

**RIGHT:** Goose had a large mass removed from his penis in December 2017, but more small clusters had reappeared months later.

aren't dangerous. In early summer 2017, when she discovered Goose's growth, she had just moved to a new area and hadn't yet found an equine vet. She decided to monitor the tumor for a while—but as the summer went by, it grew bigger.

## What You See and Why

Melanomas develop when cells that contain the dark pigment melanin (called melanocytes) proliferate. "Most equine melanomas grow in the skin and are readily visible," Dr. Byron says. You may find them as clusters of firm, dark nodules or as soli-



COURTESY, EMILY DAILY

**ABOVE:** Most equine melanomas grow on the skin and are easily seen though some can be hidden on a horse's mouth or under the tail.

**LEFT:** Melanomas can vary in size and shape and often won't pose problems to a horse unless they're aggressively growing or located in a sensitive area where they can interfere with bodily functions, such as the rectum or genitals.

tary black bumps under the tail, around the rectum or the genitals or around the mouth and eyes, he adds. But they can grow on skin in other parts of the body as well. Dermal melanomas (those located in the skin) can be flat or raised, smooth or warty, smaller than a fingertip or (in time)

bigger than a fist. Less often, melanomas may develop internally in areas such as the abdomen and the guttural pouches (air-filled sacs located at the back of the pharynx). "These internal tumors are not typically detected unless they cause problems," Dr. Byron says.

Why do gray horses get melanomas? You know that exposure to ultraviolet light increases the risk of human melanoma and other skin cancers. That's why you use sunscreen and avoid too much time in the sun. It was once thought that gray horses must be exceptionally sensitive to UV light. But it turns out that the risk to these horses comes not so much from sunlight as from their genes—the coded instructions within body cells that control how every living creature appears and functions.

Researchers have tracked both gray coat color and high melanoma risk to the same mutation on a single gene (labeled STX17), which explains why these tumors appear so often in gray horses but so rarely in bays or chestnuts. Other factors probably help determine the melanoma risk for an individual horse. For instance, other genes may act to raise or lower the odds that a tumor will develop. But a horse born with the gray mutation will turn gray as he matures and he'll be at increased risk for melanoma as he does.

Melanomas are rare in horses with other coat colors, but in those horses the tumors are more likely to be dangerous

## Not Just a Gray Thing

Melanomas are rare in horses with bay, chestnut, brown or other non-gray coats—but when these tumors appear in non-grays, the outlook is not good. "Non-gray horses with melanoma have a poor prognosis because tumors in those animals are usually malignant," says Chris Byron, DVM.

Melanomas in non-grays may look different from typical gray-horse melanomas, he adds. "They can occur in the same locations as melanomas in gray horses but may also be found in other parts of the body"—even in the hoof wall or coronary band—"and may or may not be pigmented." They may behave differently from gray-horse melanomas, too: "Unlike melanomas in gray horses, these tumors are often malignant and can become locally aggressive and metastasize early in the disease."

For that reason, suspected melanomas in non-gray horses should be evaluated immediately. "These tumors often require the veterinarian to biopsy the mass [take a sample] and submit it for evaluation by a pathologist," Dr. Byron says. Non-gray horses with malignant melanomas have a poor prognosis because, even with treatment, their tumors often spread and prove fatal.




**INTRODUCING**

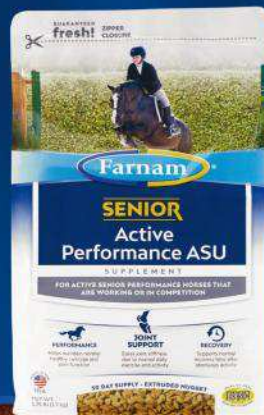
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and to spread. Read more about those cases in the box on page 48.

### When to Worry

Your gray horse's melanomas may never pose a serious danger to him. But, says Dr.

Byron, "It's important to recognize melanomas and keep track of their growth." The risk that the tumor will turn aggressive is always there and even without metastasis, a large tumor in a sensitive location can be disastrous, interfering with defecation or other body functions.

If you notice lumps that could be melanomas on your horse, Dr. Byron advises, "Bring them to your veterinarian's attention during routine checkups. If there are many melanomas, melanomas are large or the masses are growing quickly, the veterinarian should examine the horse sooner to decide if treatment is necessary."

Appearance and location are telling signs and they're the keys to diagnosing and evaluating most gray-horse melanomas. A biopsy can confirm that a lump is melanoma and not something else, like a sarcoid with superficial pigmentation. Sometimes cells from the tumor are aspirated (drawn

out) with a fine needle and sent off to the lab for evaluation. But, Dr. Byron says, "The melanomas in gray horses have such a typical appearance that they may be treated without biopsy." Besides, while histopathology (examination of tissue samples) can identify an uncommon but highly aggressive form of the disease called anaplastic malignant melanoma, it won't tell you if a seemingly innocent dermal melanoma will become malignant in the future. Researchers are searching for biological markers (such as specific cell proteins) that are associated with malignancy. For now, though, changes such as rapid growth or the appearance of new melanoma clusters serve as red flags.

By fall it was clear to Alyssa that Goose's growth was getting bigger and she arranged an exam by an equine veterinarian. The vet confirmed that it was a melanoma and found several more tumors, a few tiny ones higher on the penis and one under Goose's tail. She advised treatment.



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## Treatment Options

"If melanomas are few in number, in areas that are not causing problems and are not growing, they may not be treated immediately," Dr. Byron says. "However, melanomas that are growing or are in an area that may cause problems as they get bigger should be treated quickly." Main treatment options are removal and chemotherapy.

**Removal.** Removing melanomas—through surgery, with laser treatment or with cryotherapy (freezing)—is the surest way to resolve these tumors, at least while they are small. The larger and more invasive a tumor is, the trickier it can be to remove. Once a melanoma begins to infiltrate surrounding tissues, getting all of it out may be nearly impossible. That's worrying because incomplete removal can trigger increased growth or spread.

**Chemotherapy.** Cisplatin and other chemotherapy drugs can be injected directly into melanomas to shrink the



Many horses with melanomas have responded well to ONCEPT®, a therapeutic vaccine developed for dogs. However, the vaccine is costly and must be administered in several doses as well as boosters every six months.

tumors. Chemotherapy is often administered along with surgery, but injections of cisplatin beads have completely resolved

the tumors in some cases. The treatment doesn't cause the debilitating side effects that people undergoing systemic chemo-

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therapy often suffer.

Some experimental treatments, not yet widely available, show promise. They can include:

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**High-frequency irreversible elec-**

the tumor through tiny electrode needles. The microbursts destroy tumor cells by creating microscopic holes in their cell membranes, causing them to "leak" their contents and die. The treatment may be used along with chemotherapy. It's done with the horse standing and sedated, using a local anesthetic, and is said to be no more painful than an insect bite.

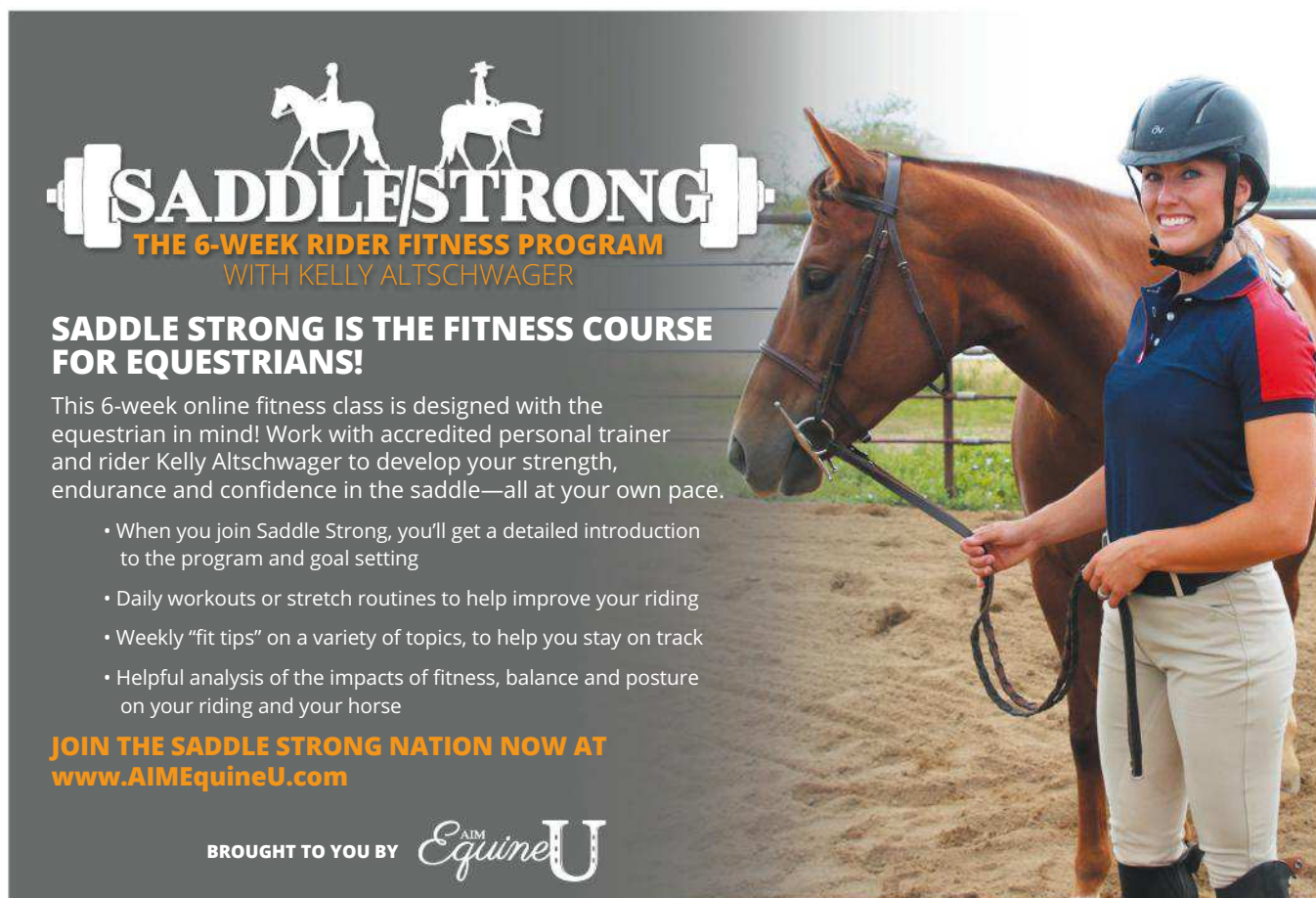
Goose's veterinarian recommended surgery, noting that if the main tumor grew much larger the horse might not be able to retract his penis. And it was growing—by December, when it was removed in a standing operation at the barn, it was a raised lump the size of a silver dollar. The vet was confident that all of it was removed. Goose healed well, and a second surgery to remove his smaller tumors was set for February.

But by then the other melanomas had grown and multiplied, even recurring at the site of the previous surgery. The vet

**The larger and more invasive a tumor is, the trickier it can be to remove. Once a melanoma begins to infiltrate surrounding tissues, getting all of it out may be nearly impossible.**

concentrated in melanoma cells so the system will attack and kill those cells. "The vaccine was developed for use in dogs with melanoma, but some horses have responded well to the treatment," Dr. Byron says. The horse gets an initial series of four shots, followed by boosters every six months. The cost ranges from \$400

**trporation (H-FIRE).** "Electroporation therapy may also be a useful therapy. Research is currently being conducted on this treatment," Dr. Byron says. H-FIRE, a version being investigated at VMCVM, zaps tumor cells with intense bursts of electricity. Each burst lasts only about 100 microseconds and is delivered directly into



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told Alyssa that on-farm surgery was no longer an option and even surgery at a clinic was unlikely to be successful. After consulting with colleagues, the vet suggested trying ONCEPT®, the vaccine.

Availability and cost were roadblocks for Alyssa, putting her in a bind that anyone whose horse has had serious health problems can sympathize with. Her vet was unable to obtain the vaccine, so she directed Alyssa to a clinic that could. Goose would need to ship to the clinic, about 100 miles away, for each of the four initial shots—and the cost would be high, about \$2,600 plus administration fees and transport costs. Already facing a pile of vet bills, Alyssa cast about for a closer and potentially less expensive vaccine source. Meanwhile, she started Goose on cimetidine in the hope that it might slow the growths. This anti-ulcer medication has been said to shrink tumor size, although hard scientific evidence is lacking.

## What to Expect

Dr. Byron emphasizes that the outlook for most gray horses with melanoma is excellent, provided that the tumors are treated early. But, he says, “These horses have a poor prognosis if tumors are allowed to grow to a large size, are in areas that are causing other health problems [such as trouble passing manure] or are in areas that cannot be treated [such as the guttural pouch or abdomen].” If an aggressive melanoma metastasizes through the body to distant sites, not much can be done for the horse.

“My horse’s melanoma case is not typical,” says Alyssa, who blogs about her experience at [goosebackriding.blogspot.com](http://goosebackriding.blogspot.com). As of this writing, Goose’s story was still unfolding. His tumors didn’t respond to cimetidine (in fact, more popped up), but Alyssa had located a veterinary oncologist in her area with access to the canine vaccine. And she had steeled herself to bear the cost. “It’s hard to just stand by



COURTESY, ALYSSA DAVIDSON

**After trying different treatment options with little improvement, Alyssa planned to use the new ONCEPT® vaccine as a way to control Goose’s melanomas.**

for an injury or illness when these horses are so much more to us than just a riding partner,” she says. “I owe it to Goose to do what I can.” 🐾

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❑ **HEAD TO** The Plains, Virginia, July 6–8, to see world-class eventers take on a course in the heart of horse country at the Great Meadow International—the only North American leg of the FEI Nations Cup™ Eventing series; [www.greatmeadowinternational.com](http://www.greatmeadowinternational.com).

❑ **RECOGNIZE** your horse shoer's good work during the 20th

annual Farriers Week, July 8–14. Underscore your appreciation of his or her efforts by submitting a story, photo or video online by July 1. Deserving shoers will be featured in the Farriers Spotlight; [www.americanfarriers.com/spotlight](http://www.americanfarriers.com/spotlight).

❑ **EXPERIENCE** The Event at Rebecca Farm, July 18–22, in Kalispell, MT. Novice through Intermediate horse trials will be contested simultaneously with two- and three-star FEI-level divisions. In addition, riders ages 12 through 21 will vie for individual and team medals during the Adequan/FEI North American Junior and Young Rider Eventing Championships, which will run concurrently with The Event for the second consecutive year; [www.rebeccafarm.org](http://www.rebeccafarm.org).

❑ **WATCH** the best junior hunters in the country put their skills to the test in handy hunter, classic and under-saddle phases of the U.S. Junior Hunter National Championships. The West Coast event takes place July 23–24 in Del Mar, CA. The East Coast competition is July 30–31 in Saugerties, NY; [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org).

❑ **ATTEND** the Pony Club Championships East, July 25–29, at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Spring Mills, NC. Members will compete as teams in seven different disciplines: dressage, eventing, show jumping, games, polocrosse, tetrathlon and quiz; [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org).

## Destination: MONGOLIA

### Step 1: Develop Endurance in the Saddle and Out

*Practical Horseman Associate Editor Jocelyn Pierce will be competing in the Mongol Derby, a 600-mile expedition considered the longest and toughest horse race in the world, in August. As she prepares, she's reporting on her progress here in Tips & Talk and online with weekly blogs at [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com) and [www.JPMongolDerby.com](http://www.JPMongolDerby.com).*

About 20 miles into a 23-mile ride—my first endurance outing—it occurred to me that maybe I should have learned a little more about long-distance riding before submitting my application for the Mongol Derby. According to the sport's standards, an endurance ride is at least 50 miles. During the Derby I will need to ride about 75 to 100 miles a day for seven to 10 days. But flying by the seat of my pants is kind of my style, and as of this writing in May, I still have a few months to learn more.

Since being accepted to participate in the Mongol Derby, I've reached out to numerous past competitors to pick their brains on every-

thing from fitness to gear suggestions and general overall advice. I've chatted with on-site Derby organizers, including Maggie Pattinson, who's also chef d'équipe of the England home endurance squad. Maggie is an invaluable resource who's shared lots of tips about endurance riding, such as learning what 25 miles—the length of one leg of the Derby—feels like so you have an idea of how far you've gone, how much farther you have to go, if perhaps you've taken a wrong turn or, God forbid, are horseless and need to decide if heading forward to the next station makes more sense or backtracking is the way to go. The guidance she emphasized most was to get as much saddle time now as possible. I have my own horse, but riding one horse for an hour a day simply isn't enough.

I've sought out horsepeople in the greater Washington, D.C. area for more rides. First, I met up with a local racehorse trainer, thinking that gallop-





**Prac's Jocelyn Pierce (right) and Angela Kemerer at Michaux State Forest in Pennsylvania**

ing on the track would apply to galloping across the Mongolian steppe. While it was a new experience and a total blast, I decided it would be more beneficial for me to rack up miles at a slower pace with endurance riders rather than do four 25-minute trot and hand-gallop sets. So far, I've been able to ride with decorated endurance riders and husband-wife team Skip and Angela Kemerer, of Myersville, Maryland, who took me on that aforementioned 23-mile ride, as well as with fellow 2018 Mongol Derby competitors Carol Federighi, an experienced endurance rider, and Matthew Graham, both from Washington, D.C. Skip and Angela showed me how endurance vet checks work, explained the importance of changing your diagonals and leads frequently to help your horse stay sound and patiently answered my rapid-fire questions about their preferred stirrups, breeches and so much else. I've also enlisted my patient and accomplished eventing trainer Rose Agard, of Monrovia, Maryland, to work with me on weekly longe lessons on my own horse to improve my

seat, balance and coordination and to tighten up my position overall.

I've also changed up my out-of-the-saddle fitness plan. I consider myself active and before signing up for the Mongol Derby, a typical day of exercise for me usually consisted of some kind of cardio or high-intensity interval training workout (I see so much of world-renowned fitness expert Shaun T on my computer screen that sometimes I forget he isn't actually my personal trainer), a 4- to 5-mile hike and a ride on my mare. But now I've kicked things up

a notch, adding more core conditioning and isometric exercises with barre classes three to four times a week and spin classes two to three times a week to target my legs and glutes. On the weekends when I don't have an endurance ride I go for a long hike, at least 15 miles, to challenge both my physical fitness and my mental toughness.

Focusing on my physical fitness has been my main priority so far, but I have plenty of other things to consider, too. Researching and testing gear has become an obsession. I've spent hours upon hours reading reviews of the best and latest helmets, riding breeches, stirrups, down jackets, sleeping bags—the list goes on—to figure out what will make up my precious 11-pound allotment.

Throughout this process, it's occurred to me how truly generous horsepeople can be. I've cold-called several people who've willingly agreed to let me ride their prized horses—without ever seeing me ride—to help me reach my goal. They've patiently answered my rookie questions, given me useful tips and shared encouraging words about my big adventure. I know that I can't prepare for the starting line all on my own and that to log miles in the saddle I must rely on others—sometimes even total strangers—to help, but so far it hasn't been a problem and for that I am incredibly thankful.

## Mailbox Another On-Course Risk

Thank you for the May special issue on eventing and the article about cross-country safety ("Eventing's Quest for a Safer Sport"). One of the things the story did not mention is that the filler on cross-country obstacles can also cause injury. I have a horse whose joint was lacerated by artificial filler in one of the brush jumps at last year's American Eventing Championships. My horse had plastic debris in his joint when he was rushed to surgery, where the joint was flushed and the debris removed. Please encourage course decorators to use natural, soft filler (brush, etc.) on sections of cross-country fences that the horse encounters. Thankfully, after an \$8,000 investment in medical care my horse is sound and competing again. I know that he was lucky.—Christina Dayton, DVM

# Winner's CIRCLE

## Riders Earn Titles at Five Collegiate Events

■ Savannah College of Art and Design won the National Champion Team title at the 41st Annual American National Riding Commission National Intercollegiate Equitation Championship, April 10–15, in Herndon, Virginia.



© GIANA TERRANOVA PHOTOGRAPHY

**Savannah College of Art and Design won the National Champion Team title at the ANRC Championship.**

The University of Virginia took the Novice Championship. Centenary University's **Michael Andrade** won the Overall Individual Rider Championship on a score of 85.50 with **Adam Edgar** from SCAD close behind on 84.11 points.

■ Riders from Auburn University demonstrated their considerable skills April 18–21 at the National Collegiate Equestrian Association Championships in Waco, Texas.



© ANTHONY HALL, AUBURN ATHLETICS

**Auburn University earned the NCEA Championship title.**

The team earned the NCEA Championship title as well as the Western and Hunt Seat discipline titles after winning both the Equitation over Fences and Horsemanship events. "It's an unbelievable feeling. Honestly, there's no other feeling like it," said **Taylor St. Jacques**, who was unbeaten over the course of the competition and was named Most Outstanding Performer in the Equitation on

the Flat.

■ Nearly 400 riders from grades 6 through 12 competed for national titles during the Intercollegiate Equestrian Association Hunt Seat National Finals, April 20–22, in Syracuse, New York. **Tomiko McGovern**, from Lucky C Stables, in New Paltz, New York, took the top prize as the Leading Hunt Seat Rider after winning the USHJA Varsity Open on the Flat Individual Final, the Varsity Open Championship class and the Varsity Open on the Flat Team Final. McGovern and her Lucky C Stables' teammates also earned more than double the points of the second-place team to win the Upper School Team Champions title. The Parkview Equestrian Team, from Central Islip, New York, won the Middle School Team Championship.

■ Twelve teams from across the U.S. and Canada competed in the Intercollegiate Dressage Association National Finals, held in late April at Lake Erie College, in Painseville, Ohio. Riders from Virginia's Intermont Equestrian



© RON SCHWANE

**Intermont Equestrian at Emory & Henry College won the IDA team championship.**

at Emory & Henry College took the national title. Otterbein University, from Westerville, Ohio, was just one percentage behind to secure the reserve championship.

■ Maintaining their lead from the start, riders from New York's Skidmore College won the Collegiate Cup Team Championship at the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association National Championships in early May at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Three-time defending champion Savannah Col-



© AL COOK

**Sweet Briar College's Makayla Benjamin won the USEF/Cacchione Cup at the IHSA National Championships.**

lege of Art and Design finished two points behind Skidmore to take the reserve championship. **Makalya Benjamin**, a senior from Virginia's Sweet Briar College, moved up from eighth place to win the coveted USEF/Cacchione Cup. Mount Holyoke College's **Mollie Kowalchik** claimed the reserve championship title.

### Ward Wins Big At Home

New Yorker **McLain Ward** and the Oldenburg mare **Clinta** took the \$382,800 Longines Grand Prix of New York, part of the Longines Masters of New York, held in late April in the heart of the Empire State. Twelve of the 30 riders who qualified for the grand prix moved on to the jump-off, but no one

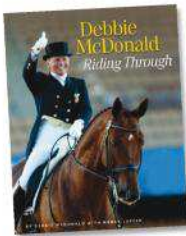


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### McLain Ward and Clinta

could beat Ward's clean and fast trip that clocked 34.92 seconds. Sweden's **Peder Fredricson** and Hansson WL finished second on 35.43 seconds.

"It's always nice to win on your home soil in the U.S. and extra special in New York," said Ward. "I can remember years ago when I was a young kid, I won a grand prix at [Madison Square] Garden and that was very special because it was the home state and the home city. It was very special again today here."



### Debbie McDonald Riding Through

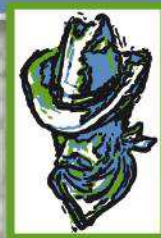
Olympic medalist Debbie McDonald describes her system for success in dressage and relates her life story: "There is more than one reason that I call this book *Riding Through*. Of course, first and foremost, riding through is a dressage term, something you strive for as you attempt to get your horse on the aids and moving back-to-front. But "riding through" has other meanings for me as well. I've learned to ride through hard times, on and off a horse, when I thought about giving up." We all have to learn about riding through, because that's the only way we will arrive at our destination, whatever it may be. #Paperback, 176 pp., #ZF514, \$19.95

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# News BITS

## Hall of Fame Honors Inductees

For their contributions to the sport of show jumping and the equestrian community, four individuals were inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame, May

31, at the Devon Horse Show in Pennsylvania. They include:



© AMY K. DRAGOO

**Norman Dello Joio and Glasgow**

■ **Norman Dello Joio.** An Olympic bronze medalist and World Cup Final champion, Dello Joio began making a name for himself on the U.S. grand prix circuit in the 1970s and continued his illustrious career both in the U.S. and internationally for more than three decades. He has also served as chef d'équipe

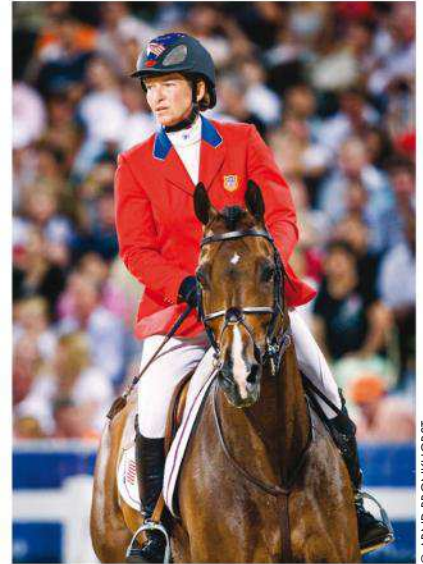
for U.S. Nations Cup teams and for Mexico's teams at the 2008 Olympics and 2010 World Equestrian Games.

■ **E. Hunter Harrison.** As a sponsor, owner, business advisor and avid supporter of the sport before his death in December, Harrison backed some of show jumping's top riders, including Olympic gold medalist McLain Ward, Rodrigo Pessoa and Daniel Deusser. In addition, Harrison's Double H Farm has owned and produced many notable horses, among them Sapphire, Ward's 2004 and 2008 Olympic gold-medal mount, and HH Azur, the Belgian Warmblood mare with whom Ward earned a 2016 Olympic silver medal and was named World Cup Final Champion in 2017.

■ **Authentic.** A three-time Olympic medalist, the Dutch Warmblood gelding Authentic came to rider Beezie Madden as a 6-year-old in 2000. After winning team gold in 2004 at the Athens Olympics, the horse called "Bud" eventually was purchased by Abigail Wexner to ensure that he and Madden would remain together. In addition to his accomplishments in Athens, Bud earned Olympic team gold and individual bronze in Hong Kong in 2008 as well as

team and individual silver medals at the 2006 FEI World Equestrian Games in Aachen. Bud and Madden also have numerous grands prix wins to their credit. He was named USEF Show Jumping Horse of the Year in 2005 and again in 2006, when he was also the overall USEF Horse of the Year. Bud was retired from competition in 2009 and lives at the Madden farm in Cazenovia, New York.

■ **Sympatico.** Best known for his show record in the puissance, the bay Thoroughbred gelding Sympatico also competed in the 1976 Olympics and 1978 World Championships. In 1972 he moved from equitation and junior jumpers with Sally Edelman to the open division with Anthony D'Ambrosio. His record-setting career as a puissance horse began in 1973, when he won the puissance at the National Horse Show with a height of 7-foot-4. He was eventually sold to Samson Farms in Canada and was ridden to grands prix and puissance wins by Canadian Jim Day. In 1976 the horse and rider were named to Canada's equestrian team for the Montreal Olympics, where they led the team to a fifth-place finish. At the end of 1977, Canadian rider Terry Leibel purchased Sympatico and the two had success in grands prix in Florida and Rotterdam. They also contributed to a fourth-place team finish in the 1978 World Championships at Aachen. 🐾



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**Beezie Madden and Authentic at the 2008 Olympic Games**



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## Health Update

### Research Offers New Insights for SDFT Injury Prognosis

**W**hen a horse injures his superficial digital flexor tendon, knowing the prognosis for recovery can help determine which treatment steps to take. While there are general standards for estimating long-term outcome, a new study has determined a more scientific method for predicting a horse's chance of successfully returning to a performance career.

A research team focused on ultrasound images of Thoroughbred racehorses with SDFT injuries at initial presentation. "These injuries occur at high-intensity gallop work," says lead researcher Rafael Alzola, BVMS, MSc, GPCert, Cert AVP, MRCVS, equine surgery

resident at England's Nottingham Veterinary School and Oakham Veterinary Hospital. He was joined by colleagues from the University of Nottingham, biotech company Oxtex Ltd. and the head veterinarian at the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

"You could probably get nearly all the injured horses back to racing and through one race," adds Dr. Alzola. "But it is whether or not they have a successful career following the injury."

**Researchers studying ultrasounds of racehorses with superficial digital flexor tendon injuries are creating a scientific method to determine a horse's chance of a full recovery.**

The researchers began by examining ultrasound images at initial presentation taken at the Hong Kong Jockey Club between 2003 and 2014. The study included 469 horses with only SDFT injuries in front limbs. "The fantastic opportunity here was that all the horses are kept, trained and raced on the same track and looked after by the same vet group," says Dr. Alzola. This eliminated many variables (such as track surface) that could have affected outcome.

All the injuries were graded using an established ultrasound scoring system. Then, the researchers used a statistical model to compare the injuries at initial presentation with the horses' racing careers following injury. (This post-recovery follow-up stage is a primary reason the study has been ongoing for seven years.) The model identified which ultrasonographic features of the SDFT injury at initial presen-



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tation were good predictors of the horses' ability to successfully return to racing (defined as completing five or more races).

The team looked at horses exhibiting core-lesion injuries, where the tendon fibers snap, leaving what looks like a black hole in the ultrasound image. In this type of injury, the cross-sectional area was the best predictive factor. This area is what you see when the image is taken with the ultrasound scanner perpendicular to the leg. It's measured in the SDFT zone showing the most damage.

When the size of the core lesion was less than half that of the cross-sectional area, the horse had a roughly 29 to 35 percent chance of successfully racing again. If the lesion was larger, those odds decreased to around 11 to 16 percent.

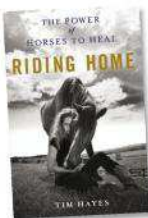
For horses without core lesions—exhibiting strain and inflammation of the tendon fibers—researchers determined that the longitudinal fiber pattern was the best predictive factor. This pattern is what shows up when the ultrasound scanner is held parallel to the leg. It shows disruption in the alignment of the tendon fibers and again was measured in the zone with the most damage.

In horses where the longitudinal fiber pattern represented less than 75 percent of the total SDFT fibers, they had anywhere from a 49 to 99 percent chance of successfully racing again. But when the affected area was larger, the probability dropped to just 14 percent.

"The really important message from our perspective is that if a horse has an injury which is likely to recur or fail when they race again, their welfare will be better if this is recognized [early] and plans are made for an alternative career or retirement," says Dr. Alzola. "We don't want to write them off, but we want an informed, evidence-based decision on what is best for them in the long term."

The team believes this study will set the stage for future work that can help provide more science-based prognoses for injured horses in other disciplines.

—Sushil Dulai Wenholz 🐾



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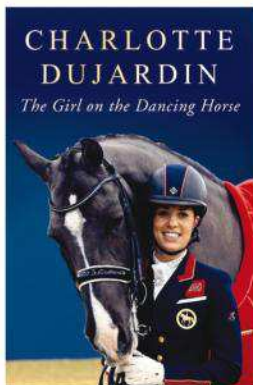
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# All in the (Long) Family

By Kim F. Miller

**D**ebbi Long grew up peeking into the Flintridge Riding Club every chance she had, some 40 years ago. Trotting her backyard pony along the perimeter of the private Southern California equestrian center, she hoped to glimpse Susie Hutchison or Hap Hansen, contemporaries who trained there and went on to international show-jumping careers.

In April, Debbi returned to Flintridge for the first time in decades and under circumstances both different and familiar. This time she brought her three granddaughters, Rachel, 17, Kayla, 15, and Isabell, 13, all of them very much ribbon contenders at the Flintridge Horse Show. That's the different circumstance. The familiar relates to the Long family's modus operandi with horses. "The satisfaction of winning is second to the joy of hard work and process," Debbi explains.

As a kid, Debbi made her mark in the hunter/jumper world as a do-it-yourselfer. She found young or inexpensive horses, trained and sold them, and from the profits learned to maximize modest funds. She then took a break from horses for college and returned to them in her 30s.

Her passion for horses was matched by her husband Tom's passion for whitewater sports. Easier access to both led them from Northern California to Idaho in 1990. They started a rafting business and Debbi established a small training business at a boarding facility while also raising their three sons.

From left: Rachel, Isabell and Kayla Long with grandmother Debbi.

Debbi scaled down her Boise, Idaho-area training business in 2011 to focus on guiding her granddaughters' passion for horses. "I wanted to give the girls the experience of putting into practice the values that horsemanship is all about," she shares. The girls' parents, Kenneth and Annie Long, were on board. They purchased land in the Boise area's Horseshoe Bend and built simple stabling and an arena. With Debbi's guidance, the home-schooled young riders oversee the daily care of 11 horses and their training as the girls' abilities allow. Along the way, they've had many competitive victories, but it's daily wins that matter most. "The first time a horse gets the correct lead is a victory," Debbi says.

Rachel and Kayla came to national notice as team silver medalists at the U.S. Equestrian Federation Pony Jumper Championships in 2015 and 2016 in Lexington, Kentucky. They continued an upward trek through the jumper ranks as they moved on to horses, with Isabell following in their footsteps.

Deciding to make the long haul to Flintridge for one show was unusual and much influenced by Rachel's receipt of a show-fee scholar-

ship from organizer West Palm Events that she earned with an essay and recommendations. She and Kayla also merited the notice of Marnye Langer of LEGIS Equine, an equine insurance company. Marnye, a jumper competitor herself, offered to sponsor them with logoed swag and funds. "I can happily say the girls' hard work and passion are being appreciated," says Debbi.

Marnye was struck by Rachel's and Kayla's budding abilities while judging a few years ago in Tucson, Arizona. She was impressed by the family's hands-on horsekeeping and entrepreneurial endeavors that included building and selling water jumps out of materials used in the Longs' whitewater rafting and kayaking business. Seeing Rachel compete at the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association Zone Jumper Championships last November, Marnye was further impressed and made a sponsorship offer.

Today, horse-shopping side trips include finding prospects that are part of the girls' horsemanship education and then sold to help fund its continuation.

Canek, a Selle Français whom Rachel rode in the 1.35-meter jumpers through 2017, originally was such a handful, it took three people to saddle and bridle him. When he "completely relaxed" after clear instructions from the saddle, Debbi realized "he had a mind" and would be safe for Rachel once they instilled ground manners. With patience and persistence, Debbi and Rachel practiced lifting and holding his feet so he'd be at ease for the farrier. In the cross-ties, one groomed while the other stood at his head to reassure him. "We did that two or three times a day," Debbi said. "We hung out with him. He's a puppy dog now. Rachel gallops him bareback in a hackamore."

That's one of the Long family's many wins and it reflects "that old-fashioned value of caring for horses and meeting their needs. I don't know what the end of the road is for the girls," Debbi says, "but imparting that value to them is our top priority." 🐾



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\*The satisfaction of winning is second to the joy of hard work and process.\*



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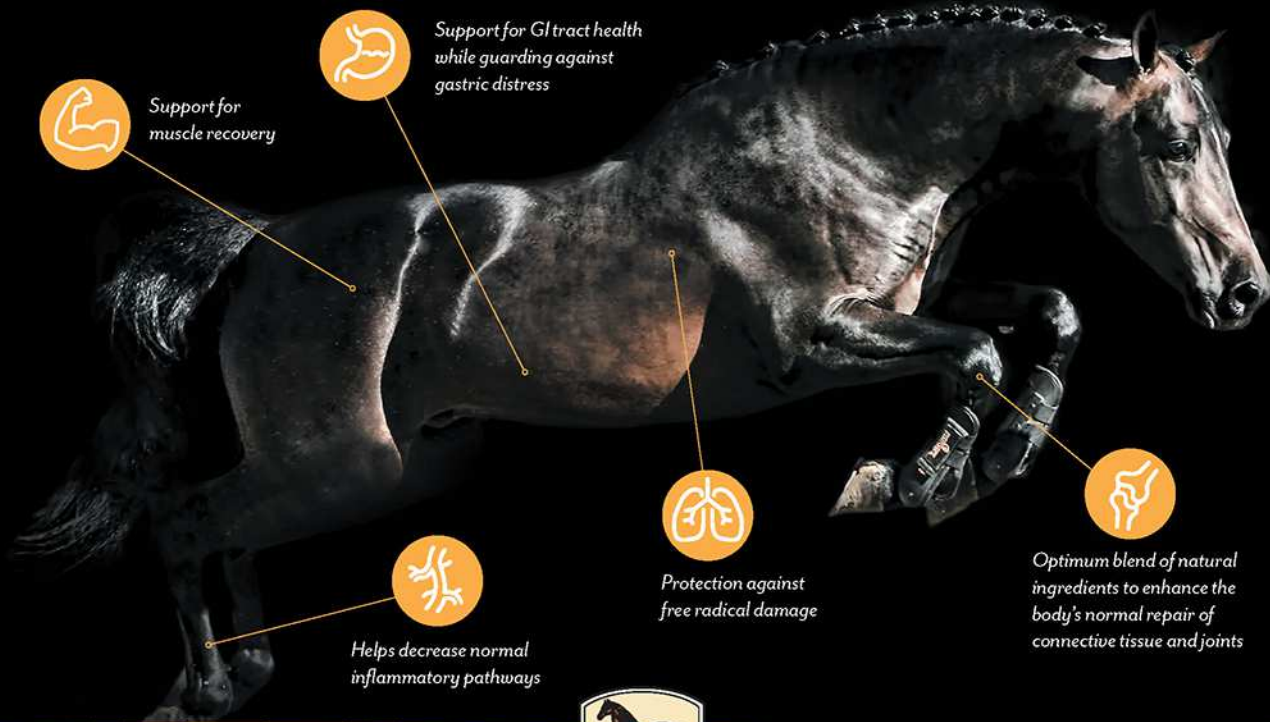
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 \*\*Gota et. al., 2010.

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