

## EAP Notes

June 11-12, 2011

- OFFER, don't ASK. Make it more comfortable for your horse to go in the direction you want than to stay where he is.
- Make sure your horse is completely straight (longitudinally and laterally) every single time you stop, legs square and weight balanced (not leaning forward or camped out)
  - Practicing stopping square every time will strengthen hind end, make him ambidextrous, and ensure square halts without trying down the line.
- Make sure he is giving his attention 100% of the time you are on his back. Make him look straight in front of him, but make sure an ear flicks back to you to let you know he's paying attention. When you are standing, give him a loose rein but always make sure the head is straight in front and his attention is with you.
- Stoppers:
  - Help them think FORWARD. They need receive some sort of discipline for stopping, so hit them with your stick but do not do it right in front of the jump. Pull out and give them somewhere to go before you hit them, they need to be able to move forward when you ask. Make them fear your retribution more than they fear the jump.
  - Stopping in front of a box is most often a rider issue. Horses don't care how wide the jump is, if they are properly between your hand and leg the width of the jump is irrelevant. A problem such as this can be fixed through lateral and longitudinal straightness. Stop about five to eight strides out from the box (NOT right in front of it) and line your horse up with it. Make them perfectly straight (forward and back, side to side) and then try to take one step forward. Not two or three, just one. They must stay *perfectly* straight, this is really hard. Once they can accomplish one step, move on to two. If they wiggle stop, straighten, and start at one again. After you can get a straight step or two forward, walk straight out of the halt, turn, and approach the jump again.
- Make the simple things hard, do not ever be satisfied with "good enough", but know that wisdom is knowing when and what to overlook on a particular day. Rome wasn't built in a day, and any issues won't be fixed in one. Strong repetition and promoting the horse's understanding are the keys.
- Landing on a lead. Because the first leg to touch down after a jump is the opposite of the lead (ex/ a horse that touches down with its right fore first will land on the left lead), if you lean left they will stab down with the left fore and land right. Keep your body straight but look the desired direction and use an opening rein if necessary.
- Warming up
  - Switch things up constantly, some days canter before trot work. Lengthen and shorten. Halt and practice moving the haunch or fore an exact number of steps.
  - Always start the warm up with just leg pressure: a very forward walk on a loose rein. Gradually add in hand with opening rein turns, eventually moving to a shorter rein and contact. Maintain forward impulsion at the walk at all times!

- Horses seek reward, so teach them by playing hot and cold. When they try something and it is right or close to being right, reward with a rub on the neck (NOT a pat). When they try something wrong, fix it. Help them understand what is right.
- Ask for a change of lead when the lone foreleg touches the ground. Suspension is the only time a horse can change his lead.
- Practice downward transitions to the trot and starting on the opposite (wrong) diagonal **on the first beat** to develop feel, because it is unnatural and requires a knowledge of where the horse's legs are. Waiting two beats to pick up the diagonal is two beats too long.
- Be a team player. Offer everything to your horse that you expect back. Set him up to succeed, always because that helps him understand better and do what you require of him.
- Use your shoulders to influence balance. Think of the distance between your shoulders and his shoulders as how much weight is on the forehead (Ex/ if you are trying to make a downward transition, stretch tall to help him collect his weight backwards and stop).
- Know when your horse is searching and play hot/cold to help him find answers, but also know when he is guessing so you can relax him. (Difference between searching and guessing: Searching is when the horse takes what you have asked and gives the response he thinks is right. It may not actually be right, but he is listening and trying. Reward small steps. Guessing is when the horse tunes you out and tries everything he knows to get you to stop asking. If this happens stop, get his attention back on you and get him to relax so that he can try again and have a positive experience.)
- Practice halting frequently. You don't need to back aimlessly to get the weight off the forehead, in fact horses can back up with their weight on their forehead. Try subtly shifting the weight back. Have a ground person tell you if their legs are properly aligned underneath them. If they are standing over their legs the weight is too far forward, if they are standing behind their legs weight is too far back (much less common).
- When you stop and straighten, make sure you step out of the halt completely straight *and then turn* if you have to. He doesn't understand the difference between shifting his shoulder in to turn and when you shifted his shoulder to make him straight. Help him understand. The last thing you practice is the first thing your horse will remember the next time you go out.
- Practice just lateral aids to create a circle: bearing rein and corresponding leg in for half the circle, and out for the next half.
- Correct your horse *immediately* when you feel something wrong. A horse's reward is the absence of aid, so if you do nothing he assumes he is right and will be less likely to do what you want in the future and more confused.
- Reward each good move in succession. Ex/ If you are practicing halting and straightening reward the halt with a rub, then move on to straighten and reward each step towards straightness.
- Reloading the spring (shifting weight onto haunch) is only possible with a straight horse.
- When you are coursing, do not see the jump, look for the jump. You can see twenty things at once—that hedge, the other horse, that spectator, the grass, the next jump, the dirt, etc., but you can only *look* at one thing, the next jump, and your horse has a better understanding of what is happening.

- Don't lean left to go right. Horses naturally want to be underneath you for their balance, so if you lean left they will go left.
- The littlest things are the most important. If your horse cannot be square and calm at the halt, he will probably be the horse to run out at the box. If you can't keep your horse's attention at the halt on a loose rein, he will probably be the horse to spook in the turn.
- If the head goes up, raise your hands with it to be level with the mouth. Otherwise the bit puts pressure on the bars of the mouth, causing the head to go higher.

And finally... what we all took away most.

*"You can't be kind of straight, just like you can't be kind of pregnant. You are or you aren't!  
-Melanie Smith Taylor*