

3RD LESSON OF BIOMECHANICS FOR THE RIDER

THE RIDER'S HANDS

The rider's hands are always the most difficult first step to get over.

- Person's instinct = stop with hands
- Horse's instinct = Run

Because we are instinctive to save ourselves with our hands, we must learn to change that instinct for our horse. It's the horse's instinct to run. Therefore, our instinct is in exact opposition to the horses and the snowball can build into a horrific struggle. The good news is that we can learn how to get past the instinct. To do that, the rider must learn how to control the horse in another fashion.



There are certain things we know about the horse's biomechanics and rider's biomechanics:

1. The horse's hind leg rhythm should be in sync with the rider's leg, seat and hand rhythm.
2. The horse needs to stretch over his back in looseness, with the rider allowing the horse to have a stretch idea so you can gather the hind legs even better between your seat and legs.
3. The contact is a not a front to back holding, but more of a balancing bridge for the horse to carry his chest elevated.
4. The rider needs to keep the foot on the gas pedal in a natural loose legged way so that the recycle of energy constantly comes from behind...impulsion.
5. The horse constantly shifts, and needs to be re-aligned into straightness consistently throughout the ride directly and indirectly.
6. Collection comes when the horse gathers his hind-legs even more on the rider's body. The rider must wait for this, and praise when the horse tries.

We know that if the chest is up, our bodies connect to the hind-legs and therefore the half-halt off our bodies allows the horse to gather his hind-legs and give us a swing we can manage. If the horse pushes his chest down, nothing will work except the negative hand that the horse cannot stand...and he will bolt against the hands...and the snowball just gets more out of hand.

The goal is to point out the negatives and learn how to make them positives; learning how to balance the horse between the aids. That is the lesson of riding horses.

Written by Betsy LaBelle

With the idea of helping Pony Clubbers understand the biomechanics of horse and rider better.
Betsy finished as a Graduate B from North Star Pony Club.

Photo taken by Betsy LaBelle of Sebastian Heinze riding King in 2000.