STRATEGY BEFORE THE COURSE: DISTANCE

By Khaled Assem

THE EQUESTRIAN SHOW JUMPING SPORT IS MORE OF AN ART THAN A SCIENCE, AS IT NEEDS PURE INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF DETAILS COMBINED WITH A FEEL FOR SPACE AND DISTANCE IN ORDER TO SUCCEED. IT INCLUDES INTEGRATING VARIOUS CONCEPTS TOGETHER. ONE OF THOSE CONCEPTS IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF DISTANCES WHILE WALKING THE COURSE.

Distances between fences are designed to allow the rider to ride a smooth course with plenty of harmony as he accommodates long and short distance demands.

Distances within doubles with different types of fences at the inlet and outlet require different takeoff points and accordingly the landing points need a lot of thought from the rider to plan his strategy well before riding the course.

The tables given on the right include some guidance to distances that are useful for the general understanding of how to plan your strategy.

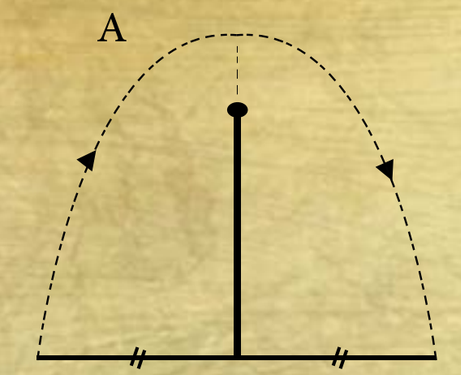
COMPETITION DISTANCES

The chart below shows the distances used between particular fences in normal conditions. all distances can be plus or minus 15 cm (6 in). horses tend to stand off (take-off early) to oxers and run deep (take-off close) to verticals, which is why the difference in distances is not greater. young horses and novice riders should not attempt doubles or combinations with two consecutive oxers or an oxer at the end because, for safety's sake there should be room for error. for the same reason, triple bars should be used only as the first fence in a double or combination.

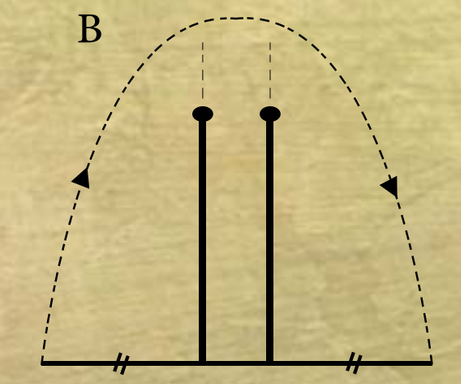
FIRST FENCE	SECOND FENCE	DISTANCE IN BETWEEN
VERTICAL	VERTICAL	7.9 m (26 ft)
VERTICAL	OXER	7.6m (25 ft)
VERTICAL	ASCENDING OXER	7.45 m (24 ft 6 in)
OXER	VERTICAL	7.75 m (25 ft 6 in)
OXER	OXER	7.45 m (24 ft 6 in)
OXER	ASCENDING OXER	7.3 m (24 ft)
ASCENDING OXER	VERTICAL	7.9 m (26 ft)
ASCENDING OXER	OXER	7.6 m (25 ft)
ASCENDING OXER	ASCENDING OXER	7.45 m (24 ft 6 in)
TRIPLE BAR	VERTICAL	8.05 m (26 ft 6 in)
TRIPLE BAR	OXER	7.75 m (25 ft 6 in)
TRIPLE BAR	ASCENDING OXER	7.6 m (25 ft)

Ireland's Denis Lynch & All Stars at the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games 2014 in Normandy

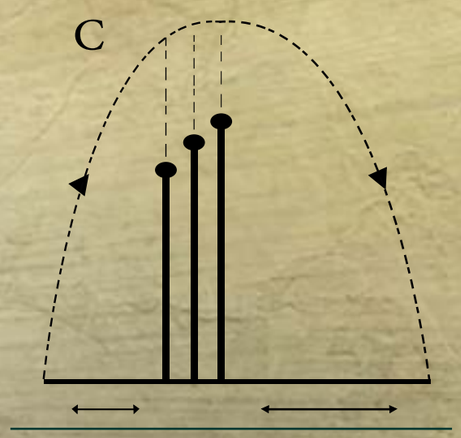
A- Takeoff point is further away from the vertical as there is no width to cross; takeoff distance is equivalent to landing distance.



B- Takeoff point is closer to the parallel oxer as there is width to cross; takeoff distance is equivalent to landing distance



C- Takeoff to a triple bar is very close as the highest point in the parabola is above the third element of the triple bar and accordingly the landing distance is further away.



These diagrams show how important it is to identify the distance in a double combination according to the types of the first element as well as the second element.

With time and practice these learned distances and guidelines should become more and more instinctive and natural to the rider leading to a more controlled, comfortable and successful round.

About the author:

Eng. Khaled Assem is a certified Level 3 FEI trainer. He has been training for over 20 years, competing internationally for 10 years and locally for 25 years.