

TRAINING TIPS

YOUR DISTANCE TO THE FENCE

By Khaled Assem

MOST RIDERS ARE WORRIED ABOUT GETTING THE RIGHT DISTANCE TO THE FENCE. THE QUESTION HERE IS, DO YOU SEE YOUR DISTANCE TO THE FENCE? OR DO YOU FEEL YOUR DISTANCE TO THE FENCE?

The late Mr. Paul Dararrgh, whom I always saw as one of the best coaches that ever lived, always said, "You don't see your distance, you feel your distance."

There is no magic here. The formula to success is becoming a better rider. You need to feel more comfortable in the saddle through having a good balance, good and supple position, and the ability to use your legs and rein aids independently. As the rider develops his feel for his horse he begins to develop his riding skills and eventually his feel for the distance and take off point.

Another factor that affects the ability of the rider to feel his distance is his active pace out of the turn and his actual turn coming to the fence. Yet again, those factors are influenced by the rider's balance,

form, harmony, and security. Those interrelated elements are vital in developing the rider's skill, efficiency, and ability to feel his horse, choose the right exercises and enhance the communication with his horse in order to finally feel his way through the course.

Good Balance: a balanced position allows you to ride more gently without too much strength. It leaves your upper body and lower body free to signal effectively to the horse. The rider's weight has to be balanced well in the saddle and carried equally on both legs.

Form: this has to do with the rider's position – the body, legs, arms, hands, and fingers. Every move transfers a different signal to the horse.

Being Secure: it takes well-toned

muscles to hold a good position for long periods, so building your strength and stamina will help you remain secure.

Harmony: the rider must be in harmony with his horse for the horse to respond to his aids without his movement being restricted. The rider should have the agility and flexibility to stay within his horse's movement and centre of gravity.

Photo by Kit Houghton – Complete Horse Riding Manual.

*About the author:
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