

The American

Hunter Class

By: Ibrahim Samy

The Hunter seat over the fences is an American discipline that promotes a steady way of riding over fences. The idea is to hunt the fence; meaning never change the rhythm, stress on staying nice and tall in your saddle, and encourages the two point position which is the forward position. With today's way of riding this 'two point' does not necessarily mean away from the saddle, but maintain a lighter seat to encourage the forward motion of both the rider and his horse.

Hunter seat over fences consists of certain straight forward fences that are usually white or beige with simple filler fences and the track consists of simple forward lines of 4-5 and 6 strides. The course starts with a single fence, to outside line, to diagonal line, to outside line... then rest area and come back do the same course starting with the other single fence, on the other side of the first one, and go to the course accordingly. Lead changes are very important in that discipline, since it shows the smoothness of the horse and rider and the flexibility and level of ride-ability of each horse.

Hunter riders must maintain the rhythm of the horses and keep a long stride at all times. Long shots are often preferred than short ones and a big gallop is often necessary as long as not rushed of course. The idea of the hunter seat competition over fences is to get the right gallop necessary to jump the lines in the designated number required for the small height without having to push or change the stride. So the more you keep a horse forward, maintaining his balance and encourage his stride to stay long and light, the better the result you will get.

The final result of both courses are added and judged on the level of how even the horse and rider were while jumping both courses. Riders get in the ring at a walk then trot few steps before cantering. As the course finishes riders slow down the canter and trot out the arena.

A lot of hunters get longed prior to being ridden in order to be real quiet and always the same. Riders are always asked to be in proper attire and they have to wear jackets and safety hats. Of course in case the weather is extremely hot

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few adjustments can be made. Horses must not show with any bandages or show boots at all and have to have the legs as naked as can be. Mains and tails should be braided, but since it is a new sport to Egypt some requirements might be disregarded for now. Both rounds are not related at any time frame whatsoever, and speed is not highly appreciated instead one should take one's time in shaping turns and coming straight to the fences.

I hope that this description gives a general idea of what we are looking for in introducing such a class to our country. This competition helps us teach new riders and horses to be more confident and take their time in approaching fences and planning their tracks. It is a very safe class over fences, encourages riders to be patient with their horses and perfect their riding ability before speeding and jumping in bigger classes. It also put emphasis on the way of riding and the smoothness of the ride, which I believe would be a great building point for those wishing to proceed and jump bigger classes ■



Ibrahim Samy on his horse.