

The History of Show Jumping

F
O
X
H
U
N
T
I
N
G



The basic principles of show jumping, which takes place on a spectacular course constructed with barriers to be jumped, can be traced back to cross-country riding and hunting. In the 19th century, hunting on horse backs with a pack of hounds acquired very great popularity in the illustrious circles of Western Europe. In Hungary, hunting with two greyhounds was also popular. As hunters were employed, they often had to jump over natural cross-country barriers, so it became ever more important for horses and riders to be able to jump obstacles without accidents. The sport of show jumping was set up to assess the capabilities of horses and meet the demand for appropriate rider training. The characteristic jumping style, however, was only developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The first equestrian high jump and long jump contest was organized in 1864 in Ireland's capital, Dublin, with the express

purpose of testing out hunting horses, while the first real show jumping competition was held in France in 1866. The



19th century jumping style differed in many respects from that of today. The rider did not facilitate the horse's



movement or raise himself up in the saddle. Karoly Kégl and Dénes Széchenyi, in the last third of the 19th century, already started working on a theory that,

when making a jump the rider should bend forward and follow the horse's jumping movement with his body. This was first introduced in the Italian army in 1890, at the initiation of Captain Frederico Caprilli. Caprilli suggests that the rider, while making the jump, should adjust himself to the horse's equilibrium. If the rider raises himself out of the saddle and leans forward it should be possible for the horse to use its back and neck muscles while jumping. Using Caprilli's methods, the earlier world record heights of 130-140 cm became easily beatable by well-trained horses and riders. The "Italian style" only became general in Hungary in the 1920's, and Hungarian horses, and jumping horses, from then on also achieved significant results in international show jumping competitions. ■