



Photo by Cymon Taylor

▲ Riding with correct length of stirrups allows the seat out of the saddle - low centre of gravity - weight consistent above the horse's centre of gravity as seen in this picture of Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum & Bella Donna

TRAINING TIPS

SEAT & BALANCE

By Khaled Assem

A HORSE WILL PERFORM WITH CONFIDENCE WITH AIDS AND BALANCE THAT ARE HARMONIOUS WITH HIS MOTION. A STILL LOAD IS A LIGHT LOAD. THE HORSE'S BALANCE CHANGES WITH THE RIDER'S WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION WHICH CAN EITHER HELP MAINTAIN OR CAUSE A LOSS OF BALANCE.



▲ *Correct jumping length - the angle at the back of your knees should be around 105-115 degrees. This position makes it easier to keep the balance through the leg in order to go with the horse's jump*



▲ *Here, the rider's knee is too far forward and the heel too far back with weight in the toes. This will have the effect of tipping the rides forward and the leg aid will be given too far back for the horse to understand it*

▼ *For show jumping, The ride's balance stays the same, with the seat lightly touching the saddle, but still moving with the horse's back*

▼ *The rider's spine should align with the horse's spine*



concept of his weight being taken through the legs on a three-point suspension system that provides flexibility in lowering the centre of gravity. Those three points are the hip joints, the knee joints, and the ankle joints. The low centre of gravity provides a more compact and stable unity with the horse.

This combined centre of gravity of the horse and rider is approximately 10% higher than the horse's own centre of gravity. That proportional disturbance of additional weight on the horse's front and hind legs should not affect the horse's movement, so long as the rider's weight is taken through the legs with some weight dispersed inwardly through the contact of the leg and the rest on the stirrups. So as far as the horse can feel, the rider's weight is just behind his withers along the same vertical line.

The opening and closing of the rider's joints, not only provide balance, but minimise the movement of the head where the rider's "sense" of balance is "felt". This security can only be maintained with the correct length of the stirrup leather keeping the lower leg perpendicular to the ground. During the jump the hip and knee joints need to open on both ascent and descent altering the angle of the body, allowing the horse to rotate around the rider's knees. It is also necessary to maintain a good and natural alignment of the spine. 

In show jumping, the point of most concern on the rider's part has to do with the abrupt shifting in weight - i.e. centre of gravity - which creates a disturbance in the natural movement of the horse and, accordingly, a disturbance in his natural balance.

The seat of the rider has to stay in harmony with the horse's movement by keeping the rider's centre of gravity in line with that of the horse. The light seat created by the rider is based upon the

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