

Built To Do The Job

SHOW JUMPING

By Judy Wardrobe



Photo: JW Equine

Libertina

Almost any horse can jump, but only those with very specific structural characteristics can jump the height and width of grand prix courses. Top show jumpers need the ability to hold their front legs out of the way plus what is commonly known as scope. But where do these abilities come from?

Starting from Behind

Just like the upper level dressage horse, the upper level show jumper needs to have a well placed LS (lumbosacral joint – the point where the spine meets the sacrum, approximately indicated by the peak above and slightly behind the points of the hip). Without it, he cannot transfer all his power forward or

upward and he cannot maintain the stretch required over oxers. The LS is the stress point for lifting and suspending the front of the horse; consequently, those with a less than optimum LS (slightly behind the line drawn from point of hip to point of hip) are particularly prone to sore backs and the calcification often referred to as a hunter's bump (or jumper's bump). Both mares in the photos (Coco and Libertina) have good LS placement.

From point-of-hip to-point-of-buttock to stifle and back to point-of-hip on a world class jumper usually resembles an equilateral triangle. In other words, the distance between each point is equal to the other distances. Combined with the flexion of the hock, this is the spring

that the horse coils before takeoff. Unlike the dressage horse, the jumper compresses and releases rather than compressing and sustaining. The more the jumper compresses, the more spring off the ground. The more angulation, the more compression in the spring. Visualize the compression possible by both mares.

Top show jumpers also need a stifle (the knee cap, not the muscle above it) placed well away from his body, or considerably lower than the bottom of the sheath on a male horse. This is one of the most important elements of scope. The higher the stifle, the less height and/or width the horse can clear. As one would expect, Libertina (bay mare), the mare that set the record in the six-bar at

Spruce Meadows last year, has a very low stifle placement, and as a result, superior scope. The grey mare's stifle is also well below where the level of the sheath would be on a male horse.

Up Front

Examining the front end for jumping ability can be a bit trickier than examining the hindquarters, but if you think in terms of function, it becomes easier. First keep in mind that the horse cannot move anything independently from the scapula to the knee; it is connected and functions as one apparatus. If the horse rolls his shoulder back, which he will need to do to jump higher obstacles, his humerus and forearm will move in direct relation.

The picture of Coci (grey mare formerly ridden by Mac Cone and Leslie Howard, but now with Molly Ashe) shows what many would consider a rather straight shoulder. Imagine her rolling her scapula back, raising her point of shoulder, which is already fairly high, and folding her knees. Clearance with the forehand is not a problem for her.

By contrast, Libertina (ridden by Jessica Kurten of Ireland) has what most would consider more slope to her shoulder. Imagine her rotating her scapula back, raising her



Coci

Photo: JW Equine

point of shoulder, which is also relatively high, and folding her knees. Again, clearance with the forehand is not a problem for her.

Draw a line up through the middle of the near foreleg to the top of these horses and you will see that neither is heavy on the forehand. The line emerges well in front of the

withers on both, even though Libertina is leaning forward in the photo.

There is a difference in the necks of these two mares, not only in the length, but in the development. Libertina has a longer neck,

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Photos by Cansport

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and it appears to be more refined, yet it probably weighs about the same as Cocu's. Because Cocu has less length to her neck and a straighter shoulder, her neck is thicker at the base and more developed on the underside. That's part of what she uses to help elevate her forehand. Riding her with a tie-down or standing martingale would put her at a disadvantage and likely cause her to rebel.

Photo Series

As the clock in the background shows, this is what a horse has to do in one second while jumping a substantial oxer. Notice the compression

■ Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association News By Jennifer Whiteside

Hippos and Horses

What have hippos and horses got in common? Well, nothing much except they both eat a lot. But horses and hippotherapy, now that's a different story.

Hippotherapy is the science of the correlation between the walking motion of a human and the walking motion of a horse and how a rider can benefit from the similarities. When the spinal lateral movement in a walking horse is coupled with the horse's pelvic rotation it imitates the same motions in a human so that the gentle massaging motion of the horse's croup encourages a passive walking motion in the rider. Add the warmth of a horse's back and all the good psychological feelings that go with riding and the walking action of a horse makes ideal therapy for riders with spastic or undeveloped muscles.

Pippa Hodge, BSR, MCSP, MCPA, is a physiotherapist specializing in pediatrics and has used hippotherapy for rehabilitation in her patients for years. A British Columbia resident, Ms. Hodge has 25 years practical experience in the therapeutic benefits of horses; she has developed workshop videos used around the world and she's a founding member of the American Hippotherapy Association. She also served on the board of the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association for years and has been a member of the organization's medical committee and is a CanTRA examiner.

Ms. Hodge will speak at the upcoming CanTRA conference in Guelph

October 13 – 16, Ontario on the value of hippotherapy for young riders and she will also conduct a practical workshop session.

A Global Perspective — Realistic Goal Setting for the Young Therapeutic Riding Client (4-10 years old) is the title of Ms. Hodge's lecture, which is dedicated by CanTRA as a memorial to LeeAnne Kidd, a successful graduate of the therapeutic riding programs of Toronto and Carleton Place, near Ottawa, and an enthusiastic supporter of the discipline. LeeAnne died in 2003 at the age of 35.

The Canadian Therapeutic Riding 25th Anniversary Conference set for October 13th through the 16th is attracting participants from all over Canada and promises to be an educational and social four day event. Lectures and workshops will be held at the University of Guelph, the Ramada Inn and at the nearby Sunrise Therapeutic Riding and Learning Centre.

Sponsors are still being sought for the myriad of events, lunches and social activities and there is still room for more delegates who wish to display their business and commercial wares.

Fee for the entire four day package, tours of the Ontario Veterinary College, awards banquet and general social activities is under \$400 but partial packages, one day tickets and entry to an individual lecture may be purchased.

For a package on the conference or for general information contact Donna Naylor at CanTRA, 519-767-0700 or e-mail at ctra@golden.net. The web site can be visited at www.cantra.ca.





of the angles behind and the stretch required in order to clear the height and the width. Now imagine how difficult this would be if this horse's LS was not well placed or if he had a high stifle or both.

Notice how the neck is used as a counter-balance in takeoff and landing, and notice how the front apparatus moves when the scapula

is rolled back. Now imagine how difficult this would be if the point of shoulder and the neck were set low.

These differences dictate whether a horse has the ability to do grand prix or not. It's a matter of physics or functional conformation. ■

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