

Summer 2010

IN THIS ISSUE:

- [-President's Message](#)
- [-Training Tips with Peter Gray](#)
- [-From the Ground Jury](#)
- [-Safety Sidelines](#)
- [-OHTA Championship Preview](#)
- [-Coaches Corner](#)
- [-2010 Coach Survey Summary](#)
- [-Muscles, Movement & Massage Therapy](#)
- [-NAJYRC!](#)
- [-Money Matters](#)
- [-XC Safety & Equitation Award](#)
- [-Where Did They Come From?](#)
- [-Profile – Yulia Novitskaya](#)
- [-Care & Feeding of a Training Schedule](#)
- [-Just For Fun – Tales from a Barn Kitty](#)

OHTA
The EVENTER

Newsletter

President's Message

Greetings to our members – hope you're all enjoying the season and achieving your goals.

In this issue of The Eventer, we have something for everyone: newcomers to the sport as well as seasoned competitors. Read on for updates on the Young Riders Program, training tips from Peter Gray, a profile of the new FEI judge in town, and much more. Please let us know what you think.

The season is progressing well. Our membership numbers are up – in fact, we've broken through last year's record and currently have over 1200 members.

We're looking forward to the OHTA Championships at Dreamcrest and already starting the planning for the selection of the 2011 venue.

We've had some changes to the OHTA executive over the last few months. Our 2010 President, Glenn McMechan, has stepped down from the position – we hope temporarily – for personal reasons. He is remaining on the board as a director, and I am filling in as President for the remaining term.

All the best for the rest of the season,

Robin Winn

President - OHTA

Training Tips with Peter Gray

Peter Gray is an international eventer having competed in most major competitions across Europe, a veteran of 3 Olympic games, a Pan Am individual bronze medalist, popular clinician across North America and current coach of the Ontario Young Rider programme. Besides his notoriety in the event world, Peter has recently competed in 4 Grand prix competitions in pure dressage.

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I usually find myself writing about schooling exercises for jumping or more recently something to do with safety and correct cross country riding technique, but since the acquisition of my wonderful Grand prix dressage horse, Collo 5 two years ago, I feel I must say a few words about this important phase for event horses.

I like to follow the principles of the German Training Scale for the teaching and training of dressage basics. When you study the content of this pyramidal scale, I think you will agree that they are also important fundamentals for training jumpers, as well. The training scale is a prioritised list of ingredients for the training of dressage. This progressive scale begins with the most fundamental building blocks:

RELAXATION- also called looseness- is the mental and physical relaxation of the horse which leads to a swinging back and a horse that is supple both laterally and longitudinally and allows the ability to stretch in a low frame.

RHYTHM- when a horse is relaxed we observe the regularity of steps within each gate, ie. The walk is a 4 beat rhythm, the trot a 2 beat rhythm and the canter a 3 beat rhythm. Our goal is to keep this rhythm in a steady tempo, or speed.

CONTACT- is the soft steady connection of the riders hands to the horse's mouth; the horse is accepting of the hand and leg aids.

IMPULSION- is the energy and forward thrust of the hind legs initiated by the rider.

STRAIGHTNESS- where the forehand is aligned with the hind legs whether on a straight line or on a circle. To have straightness, it is necessary to have the weight evenly distributed throughout the horse's body. Just like left or right handed riders, horses can be stronger on one side which can lead to body crookedness or head tilting or uneven lateral suppleness.

COLLECTION- the pinnacle of the training pyramid, not required at a high degree in event horses. It is the extended flexion of the hind legs resulting in the raising of the poll and lightening of the forehand with shorter and higher steps.

Since competing at the FEI level of dressage, my training – and more importantly the understanding of this phase- has become more sophisticated, but at the same time, less complicated!

In simple terms, a successful dressage horse at the highest level should be in front of the leg, responding to the half halt, flexible in his entire body to the left and to the right, moves laterally each direction, and then be able to do all of the above at different tempos! Not complicated! But how many great horses have been limited in their performance through a shortfall in one of these basic areas.

The first step is to recognise in which area your horse is deficient and to address these issues daily until one has overcome the weakness. As riders we have to improve our skills being trainers as well and understand the importance of repetition and positive reinforcement.

Repetition cannot be stressed enough!

Firstly highlight the weak area, then develop exercises (for strengthening, suppling or relaxing ,etc) and then through a self-disciplined training regime, simply repeat these exercises until improvement is accomplished. I am a strong believer that we should not upgrade to the next level of competition if the horse has underdeveloped skills in any area, whether it be in dressage or jumping.

When we read the judge's comments on our dressage tests (which I hope you all do!) "*on the forehand*" is not a complement! To get our dressage athletes less on the forehand we need to have them more engaged...and that means with the hind legs reaching more *underneath* the horse. Understanding simple laws of physics, when a horse is more engaged, he transfers weight from his front legs to the hind legs. When this happens we can begin to develop a horse which is less resistant and lighter in the bridle..... and more in control!

So what are the important steps to getting a horse more engaged?? Well firstly, in order for the hind legs to come more underneath (engagement) the fibres in the longissimus muscles across the top of the horses back need to be in a state of relaxation in order to allow the increased range of motion of the back legs to come in a forward direction - as well as through the associated stretching of the semitenosus (hind quarter) ligaments. By working a horse in a low deep frame ("long and low" but with an element of "roundness and submission") as part of our daily dressage training, a horse **has** to relax those muscle fibres previously mentioned to be able to lower into this position; this relaxation provides a beginning point for our dressage fundamentals, specifically improving engagement when impulsion is added by the rider's leg aids.

When a horse can work in this position on both reins (easiest to achieve on circles) we add a change in tempo to the trot and walk. It is only with quite an advanced horse that I ask for this lower frame in canter.

Working in a low frame and the associated strengthening of the longissimus back muscles and abdominus (belly) muscles also delays the onset of a sway back in older animals.

The biggest myth in dressage?? Judges want to see straightness in the body throughout the entire dressage test. No! The horse needs to have **bend** in his body and **flexion** in his poll, when on a circle, through the corners of the dressage ring, during movements such as shoulder in and half pass.....but this is all done with *straightness* which means the hind end aligned with the front end, or that the left hind leg follows the footsteps of the left front!

Bend and flexion also puts a horse in a position where it is more difficult for him to resist, so they enhance submission, the prerequisite of riding any dressage movement.

From the Ground Jury with Kellie Towers

RANDOM THOUGHTS and OBSERVATIONS FROM the GROUND JURY

How about those Pre-Training riders? We have seen more good PT tests this year than ever before – better horses, better coaching. The Preliminary riders better watch out!

That said, however, something happens when they change their saddle and go to the jumping arena. We see the kick and pull method of show jumping; the hunter style with the rider up around the horse's ears (terrifying to see cross country!); the 'let's gallop as fast as we can and hope the jumps stay up' method; among others. It would do many riders good to try and ride some hunter rounds where rhythm counts (but keeping their derriere in the saddle).

How about Woody, our favourite medical man, and his team saving a life at Cedar Run? – Not even riding related. Kudos!

Why or why do some riders still insist on going Mach One on the cross country? Haven't they heard about Rhythm? Balance? Safety? Don't they like their horses? One wonders. We should not have to warn people but we still have to. To make it worse, often when you talk to riders about this subject, it just seems to go over their heads.

It's good to see so many courses being upgraded. It's something that cannot be done all at once but only over time. It's a lot to ask our Organisers but they are taking up the challenge.

Every year we ask – please ride a round circle or, in other words, don't ride into corners when you are supposed to be riding a circle! You are throwing away marks unnecessarily just because you are not accurate, or worse, careless.

Also, when the test permits you to do a rising trot – do it. It will help you keep your horse in a rhythm and make it easier for you to ride forward into a working trot. Your horse may thank you!

What's with riders not dismounting when they finish their cross country but remaining on their horses and riding them back to the trailer/stable. They have just worked hard for you – a little reward for them would be nice.

Doesn't anyone use overgirths any more?

We would be very happy to see riders letting go of their horses' faces in the dressage ring.

I have one thing to say to Organizers: thank you thank you thank you!!! And after the Organizers, the same to the volunteers.

How come we don't get many riders scribbling for us? You would learn a lot.

Have you volunteered lately?

And for homework: what are the steps of the Training Scale?

Safety Sideline

By: Anne Zander

How to tell when you're ready to move up a level...if you can answer "yes" to your division's questions, you may be ready to move on up!

ENTRY to PRE-TRAINING:

1. I have a suitable horse and receive coaching regularly from an eventing specific coach
2. I have been consistently successful at entry level
3. I know how fast 400 mpm feels and can keep it for at least 5 minutes without my horse or I tiring
4. I stadium school weekly over a height of .96m/3'1.5" confidently
5. My horse jumps ditches
6. I can ride a stadium combination of 2 strides
7. Water is fun and we can splash through it and out over a jump of less than 2'
8. I can drop down a bank .90cm in height and maintain my position
9. Working paces and simple movements are confirmed in the dressage (most days!)
10. My horse has appropriate shoes for eventing

PRE-TRAINING to TRAINING:

1. I have been consistently successful at pre-training level
2. I know how fast 450 mpm feels and can keep it for at least 5 minutes without my horse or I tiring
3. I stadium school weekly over a height of 1.05cm/3'5" confidently
4. My horse can jump a ditch in combination with other elements on 2 strides, or in conjunction with a palisade or trakehner
5. We can drop into water maintaining our position and jump and obstacle on the way out
6. I can jump a combination of 3 fences in stadium
7. My horse can lengthen and shorten his stride in trot and canter and do leg yields (sort of!)
8. We can hold a line and jump a corner
9. I can go up and down steps and hold my position
10. My horse and I are fit and receive regular coaching

TRAINING to PRELIMINARY:

1. I have been consistently successful at training level
2. My horse and I are fit and receive regular coaching
3. I confidently stadium school weekly over a height of 1.15cm/3'9"
4. I know how fast 520 mpm feels and can keep it for at least 6 minutes without my horse or I tiring
5. Lateral work for dressage is including shoulder in and we can rein-back and do simple changes (with some luck!)
6. I can hold my line over corners, skinnies and through combinations
7. My horse can "bounce" through simple bounces
8. We can jump over a simple jump and land in water with a drop in of up to 1.4m/4'5"
9. Trakehners and palisades are confirmed
10. I have committed the time to ride 4-6 days a week

Success at moving up a level is a team effort. The #1 priority is the welfare of the horse and the rider's safety. Work with your coach, veterinarian and farrier to set yourself up for success!!!

OHTA Championship Preview

By: Siobhain O'Connor

On Labour Day weekend 2010, where will you be?

We are in the middle of August and the Championships are fast approaching and this will be an event you will not want to miss! Here is a quick preview into some of the great things you can expect at this year's Championships.

LOTS OF NEW JUMPS! Ian Roberts and Jay Hambly have been busy building. Ian promises to have many new jumps on course that have not been seen or jumped before, including a 'Pro Log' jump. A 'Pro Log' is a log that is made up of foam. It was used this year during the Rolex 3-Day event at the Head of the Lake. The 'Pro Log' will make its debut in Ontario at the Preliminary level. If you attended the Dreamcrest event in July, be warned, the course will look entirely different. Ian promises a true championship caliber course.

The next exciting new feature for this years champs is the change in the schedule. This year the event will run over three days, Friday through Sunday. This change will allow Dreamcrest to provide ample warm up and run multiple rings. On Sunday, there will be two show jump rings. Preliminary and Training will run in the full size sand ring while Pre-Training and Entry will run in the grass show ring. Running two rings on Sunday will also help facilitate an early end to the show on Sunday. We might just get home before dinner!

Also, for the first time in OHTA Championship history, qualified riders from every level will have an opportunity to participate in the Team Challenge! Gather up your friends and start putting your teams together – just remember all riders on a team must be entered in the same division. Each team may have 3 or 4 riders and the 3 highest scores will be counted towards the challenge. Oh, and don't forget to come up with a really great name for your team! Don't have a team? Fear not - simply fill out the team challenge portion of the entry form and Dreamcrest organizers will bring together a team for you! For more information on the Team Challenge, please visit [Dreamcrest's website](#).

The Championships wouldn't be complete without prizes and a party and Dreamcrest promises not to disappoint. There is prize money to be won in every division, and a 'Point 2' air vest and a bridle from CWD just to name a few prizes up for grabs. There will be a Trainer's award for the highest placed student at both the July event and Champs. Plus, the Dial a Dream cup for the highest placed Preliminary Mare at both the July event and the Champs. On top of all this is the great party planned for Saturday night. The Dave Russell Band will be playing live music and great food will be served off the BBQ. Oh, and of course, let's not forget to mention the paint ball game/war on Saturday after cross!

Whether you're a competitor, groom, friend, cheerleader, or family member - this Labour Day weekend you will want to be at Dreamcrest! See you there!

Mid-season coaching – taking stock

Coaches – the horse trial season is in full flight. As your riders progress through the busy season, a number of decisions emerge. Upgrade? Downgrade? Re-group? Stay the course? Your job is to guide your riders through the ups and downs of the competitive world.

As coaches, we deal with riders who need encouragement to take on bigger challenges. We also see riders (and sometimes parents) who have ambition that outstrips their own or their horse's abilities. Here are some thoughts on helping competitive riders as they move up, move down or stay the course at their current level.

Upgrading

If things have been going well for your rider, she / he may be discussing moving up to the next level. If you feel your student is (nearly) ready to step up, you can smooth the way in increments.

Dressage – While perfection isn't necessary, the competitor needs to be reasonably competent in the movements required at the next level. Have her ride through a test at the new level to help pin-point areas to concentrate on.

Stadium - Ensure the horse and rider are handling all of the jumping requirements of the higher level as they school at home. This means not only the height and width, but also the kinds of obstacles (e.g. combinations, related distances) and a tighter track. As the jumps get bigger, the rider needs to be able to consistently produce the quality of canter, rhythm and energy to get the job done with ease.

Cross Country - This is where the student must be very prepared to move up. Not only are the jumps bigger and wider as we progress through the levels, but the questions asked by the course designer become significantly more challenging. The rider and horse need to be ready to negotiate these questions before moving up. Depending on the level these may include: related distances, bending lines, corners, narrow faced obstacles, water, drops, banks, ditches and bounce combinations. Some of these can be schooled in the ring (bounces, bending lines, narrow faced obstacles), but others require cross-country schooling.

Don't forget to address the faster speed required at the next level. Even though an upgrading competitor should not "chase the clock", your rider should be comfortable working with the speed required at the next level.

You may want to get your riders out to a combined training show, and/or a dressage or jumper show to help prep them for the next level. Cross-country schooling with an emphasis on the kinds of jumps / questions required at the next level is a must.

Downgrading

While nobody likes the idea of a step back, sometimes this is the quickest route back up. If your student has had a couple of tough outings (stops, falls, eliminations) or some time off, it may be better to school at home and perhaps drop down a level to help re-establish confidence and get back on track. Remind your riders that even the top horses will often start the season with an easier outing just to get going. Downgrading when required can be a normal step in a competitive program.

Regrouping

An experienced coach is invaluable in providing both expertise and perspective. If things are really unraveling – training problems, confidence problems, soundness issues – coach and rider often need to re-assess goals for the season. If there is a training or confidence problem options may include downgrading, or additional schooling. The adjustment may be small (e.g. more practice jumping ditches) or it may be large (e.g. the rider needs a different mount to safely and confidently achieve her goals). With soundness issues decision-making will depend on whether it is a short-term problem – your rider misses a few shows, or whether it is a long-term or career-ending situation.

Staying the Course

Many riders spend multiple seasons riding at the same levels. This is fine. Some riders simply want to enjoy riding at a level where they are comfortable.

For aspiring riders, mileage at each level, particularly with a number of different horses, is an important part of preparing to move up the eventing ladder. Coaches working with students in the development levels play a huge role in helping these riders build their skill base – their balanced and stable position, their ability to influence the horse, their competence in each of the three disciplines. Time spent here is invaluable.

As a coach an important part of your job is to help your riders make the right choices and take the steps needed to forge a fun, safe and successful season. Developing riders as they move up through the levels is exciting and rewarding. On the other hand, helping your students through the many struggles and challenges they may encounter during the competitive season is often the greatest service a coach can provide.

2010 OHTA Coach Survey – Summary & Conclusions

In early 2010 an OHTA survey of Ontario eventing coaches was completed. Many thanks to all the coaches who took the time to complete the survey and provide opinions and suggestions.

Survey Highlights

Responses

33 coaches responded to the survey (about one third of coaches on the OHTA coach data base). This response level means that the survey responses are only partly representative. Having said this, the survey responses yield helpful insights and suggestions.

Coach Profile

Our eventing coaches are mature and experienced. Respondents are mainly aged 20 to 50 years, have a minimum 5 years coaching experience and coach competitive eventers along with other disciplines. Our eventing coaches are a rich source of information and have opinions on a variety of issues facing our sport.

Communication

Coaches generally feel they have access to the OHTA. Some are less convinced that their input is “taken seriously”. The number of comments and detailed responses suggest many coaches want to share their views.

Young Riders

Coaches generally support the Young Riders program, and many have students involved in Young Riders. Opinions vary on focusing on lower versus higher level YR's.

Rules and Safety

Coaches but would like easier access to rule books (hard copy), and feel that application of rules across competitions is inconsistent. Many count on the OHTA to help them stay up to date on rule changes and interpretation. Some suggested coaches should be consulted in the rule-change process.

Questions about Safety garnered much response. Opinions focused on 1. skill, 2. watches, 3. falls and 4. application of rules. Coaches indicated we do not need to go further on safety rules. Emphasis should be on more skill and education rather than rules to improve safety. Many oppose the no-watch rule. Rules need to be applied consistently across competitions.

Information

Coaches want information including:

- hard copy rule books and clarification or rules,
- common issues faced by coaches.

Services that coaches want

Coach specific seminars and clinics (the National Coaching Symposium was well supported), coach mentoring, assistance to gain coaching certification, networking opportunities with other coaches

Coach Awards

The response here was mixed and rather luke-warm.

Suggested Actions

Based on the survey responses, the OHTA coach committee is proposing the following actions.

- *Update “Coaches Corner” on OHTA website including:*
 - *Articles on coaching issues*
 - *“Question and Answer” forum*
 - *“Ask the coach” section on website (with guest respondents)*
- *Heads up on upcoming clinics, opportunities that are relevant to eventing coaches*

- *Rules – Clarify how to access Equine Canada rule books*
 - *Continue email blasts to warn members of rule changes*

- *Solicit views from coaches on key questions / OHTA actions / rule change discussions. Coaches are a rich and valuable source of information and opinions on issues facing our sport. The OHTA wants and needs coach input. Creating an effective information exchange is important.*

- *Links to coach-specific sites (e.g. OEF / Equine Canada coach certification information, University of Guelph Equine Research centre, other coaching organizations)*

For future consideration:

- *Ontario eventing coach clinic*
- *OHTA Coach Award idea – survey responses suggest that this is not a priority for now.*

Muscles, Movement and Massage Therapy

Keeping your horse's muscles healthy for performance and longevity

by Lindsay Day, REMT

All of a horse's movements, from the flick of a tail to the piaffe, are the result of a series of coordinated muscular contractions. While the horse's skeleton provides leverage and forms the framework of the body, it is the muscles that are designed to create movement – through the transformation of chemical energy into mechanical energy and force.

Skeletal muscles create movement by acting across joints. When a muscle contracts it generates tension while pulling on its attachment points (typically on bones). If the tension generated is great enough to overcome the resistance of opposing muscles and gravity, then the muscle shortens and movement occurs.

Generally speaking, most skeletal muscles are arranged in opposing pairs at joints. Within opposing pairs, one muscle, called the *prime mover* or *agonist*, contracts to cause an action while the other muscle, the *antagonist*, stretches and yields.

Muscles that aid in the movement of the prime mover are called *synergists*. If a prime mover is not functioning properly, the synergists may compensate to ensure the movement occurs.

Stabilizers are muscles that typically lie deeper in the body and function mainly to stabilize bones and joints so that other skeletal muscles can execute a movement more effectively. The better the stabilizers are able to do their job the more fluid and smooth the movement, and the safer the joints.

Of all the 700 or so muscles that make up the horse's muscular system, almost all of them include both muscle tissue and connective tissue. Each muscle is enclosed by a sleeve of connective tissue that serves to separate one muscle from another, and allows for the easy, gliding movement of one muscle over another. Within the muscle, connective tissue surrounds each muscle fiber and bundles of the fibers, called *fascicles* (this is what gives a cut of meat its characteristic "grain").

These layers of muscular connective tissue are continuous with one another and with the connective tissue that attaches the muscle to bone. In some cases the connective tissue will extend beyond the muscle fibers to form a tendon – like the flexor tendons of the forelimb, which originate from muscles further up the leg.

When all the muscles and associated connective tissue are functioning properly, efficient, balanced and fluid movement is possible. When a horse is able to use their body well, it allows them to perform longer with less fatigue and strain, helping them to stay sound longer.

When things go wrong

While muscular contraction is responsible for generating movement, equally important is the ability of opposing muscles to release. Whether it be due to traumatic injury, overuse, cumulative wear and tear or even underuse, restrictions in the musculature can develop that impede this releasing process.

Tight or stiff muscles that cannot release as completely or as quickly interfere with proper muscular action and limit the normal range of motion of a horse's joints. The horse's movement becomes less efficient, both energetically and biomechanically.

Muscular tension is rarely limited to one discrete muscle. Rather, there are typically areas of tension or body wide *patterns of tension*. As a horse readjusts their movement to accommodate muscular restrictions or avoid pain, compensatory issues may develop as other parts of the body are put under increased strain.

Inflammation is the body's primary response to injury. Blood vessels become "leaky" and secrete healing agents into the affected tissues. A side effect is that some of these agents act like glue, binding the tissue together in an adhesion. As it heals, connective tissue tends to become denser and shorter. Lack of movement can also cause a thickening of connective tissue within a muscle, even in as little as two days.

Tight muscles and connective tissue adhesions not only restrict healthy movement they can also inhibit the blood supply to the related muscles. This reduces the delivery of vital oxygen and nutrients to the tissues as well as the removal of metabolic wastes such as lactic acid. Together these factors can make the muscle more prone to fatigue and injury.

Injuries may also lead to a habitual change in muscle activation patterns. Studies have found that the deep stabilizing muscles, particularly those of the spine, may become "turned off" in response to injury and inflammation and that they may not always turn back on again after the primary injury has healed. In some cases specific exercises may be required to get them back to proper functioning and ensure a truly complete recovery.

Because the body functions as a unit, any undue tension, restriction, or injury to one part will compromise the effective functioning of the whole. Muscular restrictions can result in a loss of strength, power, coordination and control during athletic activity, potentially predisposing the horse to injury and lameness.

If pain ensues, not only physical performance but also attitude and temperament can be adversely affected. Resisting, refusing and going off in certain movements are advanced warning signs that something is wrong, and when headed provide an opportunity to take action before a more serious problem develops.

Massage Therapy

Equine massage therapy can be defined as the manipulation of muscles and connective tissue to enhance their functioning, in order to promote, maintain and restore physical and mental well-being in the horse. It is a non-invasive approach that incorporates hands-on manual therapy, hydrotherapy and remedial exercise (such as stretching).

While massage therapy can be used in the treatment of injury, to help encourage a full recovery and reduce rehabilitation time, from the perspective of sports massage, anything less than maximum muscular efficiency is problematic and can potentially lead to a more serious problem down the road.

Massage therapy is used to find tightened muscles, areas of tension, congestion and restriction, and works to restore the tissues to a more healthful state. The techniques used can reduce tension in muscles and break down adhesions that develop in the connective tissues. Blood circulation is also increased, improving the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and aiding in the removal of metabolic wastes.

Massage therapy is never a substitute for veterinary care, and works best as part of a collaborative approach in which the horse's vet, rider and trainer, and other health-care professionals all work together to achieve the best results. Where easy, pain-free movement is possible the horse will be both safer and happier in his work.

KEEPING MUSCLES HEALTHY

The majority of muscular problems are cumulative in nature and as such prevention is key. Below are five things *you* can do to help ensure healthy muscles in your horse:

1. *Provide an adequate warm up and cool down before and after work.*

A thorough warm up before strenuous work ensures adequate blood supply to the muscles and minimizes the risk of injury. Providing an adequate cool down after exercise assists in the removal of lactic acid from muscle tissue and helps to reduce muscle stiffness.

2. *Ensure that your horse's tack fits properly.*

An improperly fitting saddle can cause compression on the underlying muscles, restricting blood flow and causing pain. A horse's body will change with age and training so saddle fit should be checked on an on-going basis.

3. *Get to know your horse's body.*

Get in the habit of checking over your horse's body by slowly running your hands over and gently palpating the various muscle groups, tendons, and joints. Feel for differences in the "4 T's": Temperature, texture, tension and tenderness. As you become familiar with what is normal for your horse you will be able to monitor changes and detect potential problems early on.

4. *Provide a balanced training program for your horse.*

Make sure your horse is both physically and mentally prepared for the level of work being asked for. New exercises should be introduced progressively and the workload increased gradually to allow time for the horse's body to adapt to meet the new challenges.

5. *Work to reduce your own imbalances.*

Rider tension and crookedness can restrict freedom of movement in the horse's back and cause them to alter their way of going to accommodate us. Stretching, yoga, and a balanced rider fitness program can help improve body awareness and address these issues.

Lindsay Day is a Registered Equine Massage Therapist and graduate of the D'Al School of Equine Massage Therapy. She can be reached at lindsay@eqmassage.ca

North American Junior Young Rider Championship

Ontario Young Rider Report, Lexington, Ky

By: Linda Plank

The Junior CCI* team, which consisted of Haley Armstrong-Laframboise of Orangeville, ON, Sophie Kalpin of King City, ON, Rachel McDonough of Etobicoke, ON, and Hannah Rankin of Stittsville, ON, traveled to Kentucky to attend the 2010 NAJYRC. Team Coach Peter Gray, Chef D'Equip Linda Plank and our team vet Dr. Kathryn Surasky from McKee Pownell Veterinary Services, along with the rider's parents, grooms and friends accompanied them. Several Canadian Olympians were in attendance assisting all the Canadian riders - Ian Roberts, Hawley Bennett, Rebecca Howard and Kyle Carter to name a few!

The weather was hot and humid, but the riders persevered and rode through it all. Trying to contend with over 2000 horses at the horse park in the middle of summer due to the summer hunter-jumper show was a challenge in itself! On dressage day, the riders were all within 10 pp from the first place horse and were very competitive. After dressage they were sitting in 6th place as a team.

Cross country day came with clouds and cooler temperatures in the morning. Unfortunately our first rider/horse out had to retire from the cross country course, but the other 3 all put in clear jumping efforts and only 4.4 time penalties between them. The team was still in 6th place following cross country.

On show jumping day, nails were biting as one of the horses was held in the vet box for further inspection. There were several horses held, even the horse that ended up winning the individual gold medal, but we all felt it was a lesson in how to jog their horses properly for the ground jury. We got her through and the riders completed their event in the big stadium ring at the Horse Park. Talk about intimidating, but they held it together. A few rails fell and the team ended the competition only 11 pp from the podium in 4th place. Individually, Rankin and C5's Conflict of Interest, her 16-year-old Canadian Thoroughbred gelding, finished in 12th place on a score of 66.4 which included a 60.4 dressage score, two time penalties on cross country and four faults in show jumping. In 14th place was Armstrong-Laframboise and Ichabod, Moira Laframboise's nine-year-old Canadian Thoroughbred gelding, who finished on a score of 68.8. McDonough riding her own Irish Rhythm, 11-year-old Canadian Thoroughbred gelding, finished in 17th place with a score of 75.4.

Our lone ** Young Rider Sam Elsenaar and Armon from Brooklyn ON had a successful run ending up in 10 place individually and 5th with the combined team of riders from across Canada.

With our young team, we felt that they were very prepared for what they encountered. It was a little overwhelming for them as this was their first trip to the Championships, but the team members were very cohesive and were true ambassadors for Ontario and for Canada. We should all be very proud of them for a job well done!

Money Matters

By: Robin Winn

Organizer Funding Programs – Update on how we’re spending your money

It’s been a while since we updated the membership on our organizer funding programs. This article will give you an overview of these programs, fill you in on some new enhancements to the programs, and give you an up to date accounting of the funds.

We have 2 organizer funding programs: **Competition Improvement Plan (CIP)** and the **One Event at a Time** plan.

The **CIP** originally had 2 components – funding for the hiring of a course designer to develop a plan to improve and update cross country courses (up to \$750), and funding for actually making these improvements (up to \$1500 per year). In the last few years, we have expanded the list of reimbursable expenses to include things like dressage footing and safety items.

This year, we introduced a third component: funding for large-scale projects as proposed by the organizer, and as approved by the board. We are making up to \$10,000 available for any organizer who submits a viable proposal for a suitable major project: \$5,000 paid as a grant, and \$5,000 available as an interest free loan. This funding is approved on a first-come first-served basis. Based on the response to this component, we’ll modify and expand this availability next year. This year, the approved applicants are: **Grandview** for their new dressage ring footing, and **Will O’Wind** for their new competition area.

The CIP has been in place since 2006 and we will continue to enhance it to meet the needs of the sport.

We fund this plan from several sources: surplus operating revenue, late fees, a small percentage of the One Event at a Time funds, any ad hoc funding opportunities that arise, and an original capital base. Our goal is to keep a capital base of about \$40,000 so that can ensure long-term viability of this plan.

In 2009 and 2010 to date, we have disbursed funds under the CIP program as follows:

Glen Oro	1500
Will O'Wind	1500
Equus 3D	1500
Grandview	1500
Lanes End	1500
Canterdown	1500
Wits End	1500
Caledon	759
Cedar Run	2250
Total - 2009	13509

Grandview	6500
Cedar Run	1850
Total – 2010 to date	8350
Total Program since inception	60496

The **One Event at a Time** plan was introduced in 2007 when we imposed a \$5 levy on every entry in an OHTA show. The idea behind this plan is to use these funds encourage organizers to commit to long-term improvements to their venues through hosting the annual OHTA Championships. Each year we select the championship venue and up to two additional venues from those that apply to host. We enter into contracts with each of these organizers and disburse funds as the work progresses.

This year, Dreamcrest is hosting the Championships. To date we have disbursed \$12,000 from One Event at a Time funds to Dreamcrest and \$2,500 each to Will O'Wind and Wits End as Contenders for future year hosts.

Details of both the CIP and One Event at a Time are available on our website.

XC Safety & Equitation Award

By: Kyle Kemp

First introduced at the 2009 OHTA Championships at Headwaters, the OHTA XC Safety & Equitation Award continues to build momentum and popularity for the 2010 season. With safety in the fore-front of everyone's minds, the OHTA recognizes the benefits of rewarding competitors who ride in a safe manner and who show good cross country technique.

What exactly is this program all about? The purpose of the award is to provide feedback to riders and coaches and to reward exemplary cross country technique. Competence over competition!

Competing at an event where the award is being offered means having the opportunity to have "top" judges offering their comments about your ride in a positive manner. Judges are EC level 2 coaches or higher, EC licensed Officials or CET Senior Team Riders. Scores are based on elements such as rider position, line of approach & control, athletic ability, fitness and obviously, safety. A master score sheet for the award is posted, but the scores do not affect the overall scoring.

The results from each of the events are tallied up towards the year-end XC Safety & Equitation Award which is generously sponsored by Kelly Plitz and handed out at the AGM/Banquet in November. Last year's award was given to Edie Tarves for her excellent XC technique.

For 2010, the program is expanding to 3 events. Already a success at the July 25th Equus 3D Horse Trials, the award plans to revisit the OHTA Championships at Dreamcrest (Sept 3-5) and wrap-up at the Grandview Fall Horse Trials on September 26th.

Where did they come from??

By Linda Hauck

Three horses on this year's NAYRC Ontario and Colorado teams were found right here in Ontario. They all have the racetrack in common. Here are their stories.

BLUE EXECUTIVE - \$22,000 yearling

I'll never forget the moment I saw Hip #3 come out of his stall at the Woodbine Select Yearling Sale in 1997. When Blue was led out towards us all I could say was "Wow, what an athletic balanced package." He had a very confident "eye" and walk when he was presented for inspection. At that age he already thought quite highly of himself!

I advised a client to purchase Blue Executive at that sale as a racing prospect. He is by Bold Executive who tends to sire babies that are solid, well-balanced, and level headed and often get to the races as a 2 yr old.

Blue proved to be an easy youngster to break and train as well as providing comic relief in the barn and at the track. I'll never forget the first time Blue went to the gates at the track as a 2 yr old. He walked straight in. They closed the front gate and he did nothing. They closed the back gate and he stood perfectly still. And then they let him pop out and he was all business.

He was always so cheeky, constantly demanding attention. He broke many a light bulb with his jolly ball as he tossed it around his stall.

Blue won a few races and retired sound after firmly deciding that the race for him ended at the ¼ pole and not the wire! He would come back to the barn kicking and bucking, so proud of himself!

His last race as a 4 yr old was on a Sunday. I took him to the farm on the Monday, hacked him Tuesday (in the woods, through puddles), jumped him Wednesday and sold him the Thursday of that same week to Caroline Moreshead. He was so unfazed by everything around him. He really did sell himself.

Blue Executive was on the Ont. YR Team this year with Sophie Kalpin.

Simply Ben - \$2500 OTTB

In February of 2002 I went to look at "Misquote". Misquote had been bought off the track the previous August and had not been in any type of training. I couldn't believe the condition of him. He was a 5 yr old, grossly underweight with all his ribs sticking out. He had a long shaggy coat, but he had the kindest of eyes. This "diamond in the rough" was well put together with a walk that over stepped almost two feet! The girl that owned him wouldn't ride him as he was too fast for her. I felt so bad putting a saddle on him. Despite his dreadful condition I hopped on Ben (as he was renamed later) and he had the best attitude. "What do you want to do?" I was amazed. I free jumped him over a little cross rail and he had the neatest form over the fence. Ben passed the vetting so I brought him home. A few weeks after Ben had settled in (and trust me people must have been thinking what has Linda found this time because of how rough he looked!) a massage therapist was working on another one of my horses. She knew Ben from the track. I asked her what she remembered about "Misquote". As a racehorse Ben had won at a

high level. Her answer was “We used to call him “Mistake” because he couldn’t do anything right!” How wrong they were.

I sold Ben shortly thereafter to one of my YR’s at the time, Daelin Verkindt. Ben was twice top thoroughbred - at Training and Preliminary. Daelin and Ben were also Training and Preliminary Champions. Daelin competed Ben to Intermediate before selling Ben to Kaylin Dines of Colorado.

Ben and Kaylin were on the Colorado YR team this year.

Irish Rhythm - \$1200 OTTB

Rachel McDonough had ridden with me for 4 years during which time we developed the Haflinger/Icelandic pony “Ice Tea” to Pre Training. I couldn’t see asking 13hh Apollo (his barn name) to compete at training level and Rachel was outgrowing him quickly. Rachel was one of the few young riders I could take to the racetrack to go shopping for her next horse. Rachel always rode calmly and had the quiet hands needed to ride a thoroughbred. Plus an OTTB would fit in the budget. So off to Ft. Erie we went.

“Irish Rhythm” as Rachel later renamed him, was at the end of his racing career and had been owned by the same trainer since he was a yearling. He was 5 when we saw him. A plain bay but well put together, with great bone, a fabulous walk, and that required kind eye. Once we got him to the barn and put him into training Oliver (his barn name) proved very easy to train, bold and cat-like over his fences and always very safe with Rachel.

Irish Rhythm and Rachel were on this year’s Ontario YR Team

Linda is a long time Eventer and lover of the Thoroughbred. Linda will accompany people to the racetrack to find their next show horse. In addition, Linda is a Level 2 EC Coach and a Level 2 Technical Delegate.

You can visit her website at www.tapestryequine.ca

Profile: FEI Judge Yulia Novitskaya

By: Katie Holman

In 2008, FEI Judge Yulia Novitskaya said goodbye to her native Belarus and immigrated to Quebec, Canada. Now a resident of Ontario, the OHTA would like to welcome her to our province, where she hopes to continue to pursue her passion of riding, coaching and judging.

1. **FULL NAME:** Yulia Novitskaya
2. **AGE:** 35
3. **HOMETOWN:** Minsk, capital of the Republic of Belarus
4. **I HAVE BEEN RIDING SINCE:** 1986 (11 years old)
5. **MY FIRST HORSE WAS:** after 2 years of preparation in a beginners' group, where we used to ride different horses, my first horse in dressage group was a great Grand Prix school master Yenisei. A golden palomino Trakehner – Akhal-Teke stallion, prepared by the Olympic Games Dressage Team Gold Medal Winner (Moscow 1980) Victor Ugriumov. We were partners for 3 years.
6. **PROFESSION? EDUCATION?** I was graduated from Minsk State Linguistic University in 1997. From 2006 to 2008 Worked in Belarusian Equestrian Federation, as BLR NF Secretary General. In 2006 was certified by the FEI as an FEI coach Level 1. In 2009 I was promoted to an FEI C eventing judge. During all those years I never gave up riding, coaching and judging. Here in Canada, almost for 2 years, I worked as coach and rider at Lusitania Stables (St-Lazar, Quebec).
7. **I HAVE BEEN JUDGING SINCE:** 1998
8. **I MOVED TO CANADA BECAUSE:** It is a great country to live.
9. **DESCRIBE YOURSELF IN 3 WORDS:** Professional, Patient, Perfectionist.
10. **WHOM DO YOU ADMIRE MOST:** I admire everyone who forms a true partnership with their horse.
11. **IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT DRESSAGE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?** The attitude. Dressage is not about a fancy riding or a beautiful, but absolutely useless passenger position. It is about harmony, understanding and cooperation.
12. **YOU ARE CURRENTLY PARTICIPATING IN THE GLOBAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EVENTING OFFICIALS...TELL US ABOUT THAT.** Yes, I am. The Global Education Program for Eventing Officials was launched by the FEI in 2009. The program, funded by the FEI, will run for a five year period 2009-2013. The program is for Judges, Course Designers & Technical Delegates who are presently included in the FEI Eventing Officials directory.

There are THREE separate programs:

Shadow Officiating: The opportunity for Eventing Officials from less experienced countries and from countries with less competition opportunities, to accompany a "senior" official throughout an event. Selected participants will travel to International events to acquire more experience.

Exchange of Eventing Officials: To share the knowledge experience of the sport within different regions of the world. Officials from more experienced countries will be appointed to officiate in less experienced countries, to share their knowledge with local officials. Officials from developing and less experienced countries will be able to travel and "officiate" abroad in more experienced countries, to gain experience.

Mentoring Scheme: This will provide opportunities for recently appointed FEI "C" officials [Judges, CD's and TD's] to be "paired" with an experienced "mentor," who will help to guide them through their first two years of duties at the International level.

In the framework of the exchange program, I was appointed to officiate at Blair Castle (GBR) CCI** this August. As well, I am eligible to receive mentoring from Susan Stewart (GBR) I Eventing Judge.

13. **FINISH THIS SENTENCE: To me, Eventers are** the most serious and honest riders.
14. **SOMETHING PEOPLE WOULDN'T NECESSARILY KNOW ABOUT YOU:** I'm a big dreamer.
15. **IN 5 YEARS, YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING WHAT?** Coaching, judging, riding (probably my own horse).
16. **3 THINGS THAT ARE ALWAYS IN YOUR FRIDGE:** Milk, Fruit, Meat.
17. **OTHER INTERESTS?** I'm a very typical horse person. I love horses, dogs, cats and to read books.

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF A TRAINING SCHEDULE

By: Nancy Tapley

Riding is a complicated joy, and eventing is the most demanding of equine sports. To do it well, every rider needs to understand their horses, how to condition and train them, how to ride them to meet the varying demands of the sport, at any level. Here's some tips...

1. **Beware the bug:** Not the kind you find in your computer, the kind you vaccinate against. Do it early in the season, so there's time for the horse to recover from any reaction. Many don't feel their best right after vaccines. Pay close attention throughout the season to the horse's farrier and vet schedules -- if these aren't working, the horse can't be at his best for you.
2. **Better safe than sorry.** The creek may not rise. The sky may not fall. But sooner or later you'll be faced with the decision of whether to run an "iffy" horse. No contest. Wait for another day. Allow time in the schedule for off days, injuries and lousy weather. If that means starting several weeks sooner in your conditioning, then that's where you start. Same goes for the weather and footing... it's not worth running the horse in bad conditions just because you might get a \$5 ribbon, when the trade off is that you could rip away five years of instilling confidence in the horse. Or worse, cause an injury. Shows are like buses... there's always another one coming.
3. **Leave a trail of bread crumbs.** One day you'll want to know what you were thinking during that wonderfully successful season you had a few years back. Write down and document the daily work done, and observations made, in a barn diary. Draw a line across each day on the calendar: on the top, jot down your game plan. On the bottom, write in what you actually got done. You'll be surprised how easy it is to get behind or distracted, and seeing it written down helps keep you on track.
4. **Set policy.** Know what you want to accomplish BEFORE you step into the tack. Is today a quiet hacking day? Or are we tackling that on-going transition problem yet again? Again, advance planning ensures that the horse has time to think, and absorb, and relax, while keeping you moving forward in your program. You should have worked up a training program with input from your coach at least three months prior to your first planned competition. The last competition of the season is the beginning of your next year's program -- what new skills need to be developed, what old habits need rooting out, before you both take a well earned break from the sport.
5. **Share tactics.** Try not to train in splendid isolation. Not because you can't get away with it -- you probably can, at least for a while—but because unsupported programs have a tendency to freeze up, crash, fade to the blue screen of death. Two heads are often better than one, particularly if they're both on people. You need a coach. Courses are more technical and demanding now than ever before. Without a knowledgeable, accredited coach to keep an eye on you, it's all too easy to become a statistic,

one of those riders that the Ground Jury gets radio calls about (“keep an eye on #54, dangerous riding.”) That's not the rider you want to be... get quality coaching, from experienced and certified event coaches.

6. Network. Convince the coach, the vet, the blacksmith, the feedstore and all the other members of your team – including yourself – that you ARE a team, that what you are doing with your horse is important, you are dedicated to the task, and that success relies on all of you doing your job together. Work with them, not against them, and get them to work with you. Listen to what they are telling you, too. You get a lot farther when everyone in the same boat is paddling in the same direction.

7. Think of your horse as the Great Best Hope. You wouldn't leave an uber-expensive Gold medallist to fend for himself in substandard conditions. If you want your horse to BE a champion, treat him LIKE a champion. All the time, all the way. Nothing concerning the horse's well-being is ever too much trouble for an event rider. Does that mean missing parties, getting up early, staying a little later, taking time for the tiny things? You bet.

8. Expect the best. Prepare for the worst. A positive mental outlook will do wonders for any regimen. Exclude the words “won't” and “can't” from your mental vocabulary. Get a clear mental image of what you want to accomplish. Write it down. Hang it on the bathroom mirror. Look at it every day. Proceed towards it with determination and confidence.

9. Don't cast your plans in stone. Always have a contingency plan available for the times your horse has been reading a different book on the subject. If the horse isn't ready, the rider isn't ready. Let the horse determine how quickly the program proceeds. Can experienced riders upgrade horses faster than novice riders? Of course, because they know how to help and educate the horse... If you don't have the same experience, expect the learning process to take longer.

10. Keep it Real. Be brutally honest with yourself about your abilities. You can't fool the horse. Nor can you apologize to him. Run him headfirst into a ditch and wall once, and all the carrots in the world aren't going to make him believe in you again. The horse's memory is an awesome thing. Treat it with care. First you learn to ride, *then* you learn to compete. First you get good, *then* you get fast...

11. Hitches, Glitches and unravelled Stitches. When it all goes wrong, take a deep breath, and walk away. Never ride the horse when you are angry... If you get eliminated, walk back to the barn – be happy, you've just identified where there's a big hole in your homework, so now you know where you need to focus your training efforts. Don't hit the horse because you didn't educate him... Don't hit the horse because you somehow took away his confidence. Don't hit the horse because you aren't having a winning day. Don't hit the horse if you want him to think this is a fun game to play with you.

12. Don't push the river. It flows by itself. You cannot upgrade simply because you think you'd like to be a higher level rider. You cannot fool the horse, no matter how expensive your saddle and riding boots may be. When you and the horse are ready, the coach will let you know. You will know. The horse will know. Don't force the program. Pay attention to the details, to the small close range goals you have set. As you master them, the world begins to unfold for you. Proceed in small steps, and let the river flow.

13. Credit where credit is due. Good sport depends upon good sportsmen. Be one.

14. Smile. Remember, we're doing this for fun. This sport runs on the goodwill of organizers and unsung volunteers. Be a role model, be the better person. Everyone should get to enjoy the day, especially the horse...

Mal



By:

xo

Just For Fun: Tales from a Barn Kitty

Most people would probably think that being a barn kitty at a well-established eventing barn would be a pretty cushy life. There is only one word I can think of to answer that – wrong-o! The hardships, both physical and mental, are incredible and vast! Between the burden of the constant demands of hunting, the intermittent meals and the salacious gossip, it's an awful lot for one little kitty to bear.

It's a full time job being a barn kitty and the pay stinks – literally. Mice are rare (we eradicated them long ago) and moles are all we have left to satisfy our needs, but are we really expected to chew on one of those hideous rodents? Gross! Especially not when mama feeds us Fancy Feast. Ok, I can hear you now – “a barn cat getting fed Fancy Feast?!” Yes, well Fancy Feast may be fed, but mama is kinda mean about it and it only comes on special nights. We beg and plead, but it only shows up on our plates 4 or 5 nights a week! It's not right!

Mama's pretty good about feeding us treats though! Temptations flow freely almost every morning, but I have to share them with my brother, who bites my ear if I happen to get more than him. Sometimes mama buys the wrong flavour and we are left with plain old chicken or beef to choke down instead of the splendidly perfect 'seafood medley'! The horror!

Lately, there has been a stray passing through. He claims his name is Rex, but I don't believe that for one second. He is definitely more of a Cuddles or Fluffy, if you ask me. I'm a lover, not a fighter, but I can kick his little kitty behind all the way across the street any day of the week! What a wuss! Fighting isn't my thing, but it makes mama happy. She praises and strokes me in my sweet spot behind my ear and bonus Temptations usually follow. But geez, the things I gotta do for a little affection!

Being a barn kitty means I can only get 20, maybe 21 solid hours of sleep per day! And nothing irks me more than being disturbed from my 2nd early afternoon nap, than by voices in the barn as the humans exchange stories. It's a lot for one kitty to have to bear on his wee kitty shoulders. Loves and hates, break-ups and dates. It's incredible to me just how complicated it is to be a human. Maybe, if they could just stop once in a while, stare long and hard into the tall grass, wait for movement and doze off for a while, the human world would be a little less complicated, but no...they have to make things so complicated.

This one time, when Rusty's owner was away, another human rode him! That same day, that same human rode 3 other horses!!! I couldn't believe it!! Who knew a barn kitty would witness such salaciousness! And then there was the time that one of the humans put their horse on a trailer and that horse never came back. The human stayed, but poor Timmy never came back!! Where did he go? What happened to him? Is he ok? Apparently, no one ever thought to mention all this to the barn kitty. I hope mama never sends me away....

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the absolute worst aspect of this particular barn! Every so often the farm is over-run with horses and human! It's crazy!! I can only imagine what mama would say if I ever let the place get that out of control with mice!! But the humans seem ok with it, welcoming

even! These days are a kitty's worst nightmare! Loud thundering hooves and voices boom from sun up till sun down and all that is left for a kitty to do is curl up in the hay loft and rest until the cloak of darkness falls and it's finally quiet and safe enough to venture downstairs to eat. Sure, Fancy Feast fills our plates, but after a stressful day like that, I really wouldn't accept anything less.

My mama, she's pretty great for a human! She tries so hard to provide for myself and my brother, but like most human mamas, she just doesn't understand me. Sure, she feeds me and always has fresh water for me, but her aspirations for me are so different than my own. You see, mama wants me to become a dancer! She helps me practice to the hip-hop beats almost everyday and I do love it! But, for as much as I love my mama and for as much as I enjoy the dancing, it's just not what my true calling is. Mama doesn't understand that what I really want to be is a writer! It's been discussed but the discussions always end the same way....that I can't do it because of my "disability." I can't believe that humans look at us kitties as being "disabled" just because we are born without thumbs! Well, thumbs may be needed to hold pen to paper, but thumbs are not required to type! And mama never told me that if when you use a computer, you also get to play with a mouse at the same time! Fantastic!! So, when I'm not busy chasing moles, my brother, the stray or my tail, I am going to be feverishly working on my craft!

