

Lessons in Longevity



Different reining and working cow horse programs have different emphasis. Some trainers get a charge out of taking a green prospect and prepping him for a major win at a futurity. The futurity horses are then pointed to the breeding shed, broodmare band, or are turned over to an aspiring youth or amateur rider. The training program moves on to the next band of promising youngsters.

Other trainers take a different approach. They want a horse that will perform consistently over time. Those horses may not make a World Show-winning run every outing, but they can place in classes through the year. In a pinch, they are capable of producing an outstanding score, but the real goal is producing a horse with a career.

Today, not as much importance is placed on winning high-point titles as it was prior to the creation of the World Show. But a horse that can still go out and do his job effectively, weekend-in and weekend-out, deserves a lot of respect.

According to Charlie Hutton of Hilldale Farm in Fayetteville, Tennessee, if you want to develop a horse that will be competitive long into his teenage years, you have to start with the right horse.

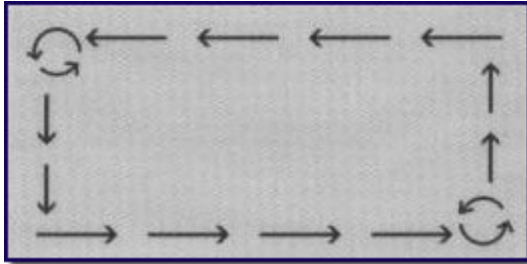
"**A** lot depends on the horse you start with," Hutton says. "If you are going to select a horse with the idea that he will have a long, useful life, that horse needs correct conformation, breeding, and, especially, a trainable attitude."

Not only will the horse need the physical and mental toughness to sustained repeated trips to the show pen, he will also need to be able to withstand the rigors of hauling.

During more than 20 years of training and showing high-point winners, Hutton has put together a program for making a horse last.

THE RECTANGLE

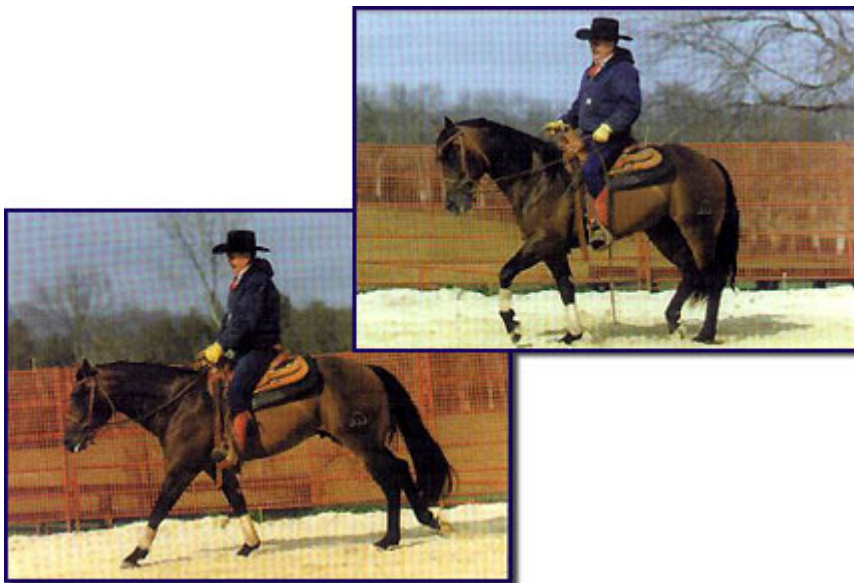
Whether you want to win the futurity next year, or you want your horse to win a world championship like Hall of Famer Royal Santana at age 20, the horse has to have the proper foundation.



"It can't be overstated that a horse that's going to last has to be educated to let you use all of the tools available," Hutton says. "You don't just ride with your hands, but you have to have a horse that works off of your seat, legs and voice."

The horse needs to accept being driven forward into the bit by the rider's seat and legs. Forward motion and collection are enhanced with this method without pulling the horse into the bit.

According to Hutton, show horses often lose their guide function after a few shows. After hauling a horse to the first few shows of the year, putting them through the stress of new situations, you find out how broke they are. In addition, most people act differently at the show than they do at home or in the warm-up pen. Your long, slow "Whooooaaaaa," under duress suddenly becomes "Whoa!!!!!!!!!" Your voice becomes pitched and excited, and you seem different to the horse.



Longer - shorter - Stride control is an important part of Hutton's program. While riding the rectangle, he allows the horse to extend on the long sides, and collect on the short sides. Stride control can be crucial in less-than-perfect arena conditions, enabling you to keep your horse in the ground. The horse should be able to extend and collect at both the trot and the lope. In order to maintain longevity in a horse, it's important to keep his attention centered on you, not on the pattern. Try to have variety as you go around the rectangle. Don't forget to reverse direction.

Regardless of the reason, you must develop ways into your training program to fix problems as they emerge.

One of the most valuable methods Hutton has found is "riding the rectangle", which gives you the opportunity to work on the things your reiner or cow horse needs in his toolbox. As

in most training programs, the core of the rectangle centers around rest and teaching the horse to give to pressure.

The horse learns to appreciate rest and being freed from pressure when he is in the right frame. For example, if the horse is traveling correctly in a straight line between the reins and the legs of the rider, the horse is left alone.

The rectangle forms a basis for teaching the parts of a pattern either in the reining or the reined work in the working cow horse class. All maneuvers can be broken into parts, which can be worked on separately to make the whole better. The maneuvers we see in a pattern can be broken down into parts, making it easier to identify and fix problems, especially in older horses. Spins, rollbacks and stops and stop are based on giving to direct and indirect rein, collection and control, all of which are a part of Hutton's rectangle.

CHARLIE-ISMS



According to Hutton, keeping a horse sane and healthy enough to be a high-point winner involves your entire program. The horses need to have the nutritional background, health program and training foundation to be able to go up and down the road week after week. In addition, the competitor needs to know when to go for the big score and when the horse requires a schooling pattern.

But when you school a horse in the show ring, Hutton emphasizes that it's not a time to get even with a horse. You also don't want to upset the judge by taking too much time. Correct enough to remind the horse that you are in control and keep him honest in the

pattern.



There might be times when you have to find an open arena and play games with your horse. Trot in, and trot right on out. Set someone in the judge's chair, and perform various maneuvers in front of, and away from the judge.

Hutton works all of his horses on cattle, even if they only show in reining. Cattle give the horse a reason to perform a maneuver, and the challenge keeps even an older horse mentally active.

The bottom line is to get and maintain a horse that's broke enough to perform, strong enough to last and has a training foundation

that allows you to fix inevitable problems.



Charlie checking on the broodmares and babies.

Nellie - On an older horse, stops can be long sides of the rectangle. Vary stops at and don't get in the habit of stopping every important to condition the horse to respond. Avoid patterns if at all possible. your vocal cue by making it as long, deep can. Try to use the same tone the next time show ring.



Whoooooaaa, included on the different gaits time. It's to your cues. Overemphasize and slow as you you're in the



Back up - After you stop, back your horse a step or two, making sure the release is obvious. Allow the horse to rest, and even stop and pet him to reinforce the proper response.

- *Article by Jim Bret Campbell*
- *Quarter Horse Journal*