

Liza Boyd's Step-By-Step Exercises for Hunter-Ring Success

# PRACTICAL HORSEMAN

Expert how-to for English riders

July 2017

**2 Top Jumper Riders  
BLEND  
CLASSIC AND  
CUTTING-EDGE  
IDEAS**

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Rolex Report and  
Rider Critique**

**14 TRAINING  
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5-TIME OLYMPIAN  
CARL HESTER**

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Lead Every Time**

**Colic Surgery  
ARE YOU  
PREPARED?**

**Visualization  
Strategies  
To Boost  
Confidence**

**Summer Woes  
COMBAT**

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# Four Riders with Good Legs



**1** Our first rider has a very, very good position, and it starts with her leg, which is a rider's foundation and gives her security. This rider's correct stirrup length is reflected by the angle behind her knee, which is 100 to 110 degrees. The position of her foot is a little old-fashioned with her instep against the inside branch of the iron and her toes out about 45 degrees, the maximum a rider wants. That foot position is not wrong, but a leg is more supple and flexible if the little toe touches the iron's outside branch. Her ankle is down and the contact is distributed among her thigh, knee bone and calf.

This is how a rider's base of support should look—she's not too far out of or behind the saddle. Her posture is textbook—from the back of her neck through her spine is flat with no sign of a roached back or swayback. She's using a short crest release, but she's so talented, she could lower her hands 3 to 6 inches to form a straight line from her elbow to her horse's mouth. The automatic release, or following hand, would allow her to maintain a soft contact with her horse's mouth.

This looks like a wonderful, generous horse with expressive ears and eyes. His forearms are up, though he's a little loose below the knees, which is not dangerous but not as attractive as perfectly symmetrical legs. He's a rather flat jumper from his poll to the dock of his tail. It may be the size of the jump or it could be his style.

The horse is very clean and well groomed—see how his coat has a deep glow. He looks to be in a lower-level jumper class, so he doesn't need to be braided. The rider is using a partial rubber rein, which is appropriate for jumpers because it aids the grip. I love the figure-eight noseband because it works to keep the horse's mouth shut, but it crosses so high that there is no chance of it affecting his breathing.

**2** Though this rider's seat is too high out of the saddle, she has a very good leg and I like that she is very close to demonstrating the more-advanced following hand.

The stirrup iron is a little too far back on the ball of her foot—she should have about a quarter of her foot in the iron. It also appears that her foot is touching the inside branch of the iron; instead, her little toe should touch the outside branch. Other than that, her heel is down, her toe is turned out and her calf is in contact with her horse's side.

I like her short stirrup length for jumping, but it may have contributed to her buttocks coming too far out of the saddle. The horse's thrust alone pushes them out of the saddle. When a rider's seat is this far out of the saddle, she has incorrectly participated in the effort. This rider also has a slight roach, but her eyes are up and she has very good focus. Her release is considerably lower than the crest of the horse's neck, and she's maintaining a beautiful, practically straight, soft connection with his mouth in the air.

This horse has an interesting jump because he appears to do it so easily. He's scopey and has a dramatic front end with his knees way up. He's rounder than our first horse but still a little flat.

His coat is a little long for the amount of work he is doing. If he sweats too much, he could get a chill. More grooming or a full or partial body clip is needed. I'm not a fan of colors, but at least the blues in her attire and his match. Recently, people have argued that it's safer to have hair out of the helmet for better fit. I'm not an expert in that field, but traditionally riders have tucked long hair up underneath their helmets because it could get caught on something going back to the barn or if they ride in the woods.



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