

the best of the

Hugh White

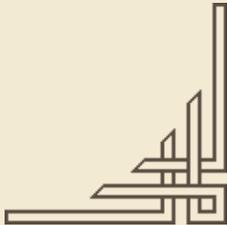
Jumping
Clinic

Courtesy J.L. Werner and HWTS

CAUTION: Contains biting sarcasm and unapologetic bluntness.

People with sensitivity to either of the above should consult a physician before reading. You may recognize yourself or your friends in the photos. If this causes you distress, we suggest you don't go posting your crappy pictures on the internet next time.







Okay, I think we need to change the name of this column to "Dumping Clinic" because that's where this rider is headed. Pay attention people, this is what happens when you have too many margaritas at the exhibitor party and then try to ride in your hunter class. The alcohol affects your equilibrium and you plop your butt into the saddle over the fence, an open invitation for your horse to buck you into next week

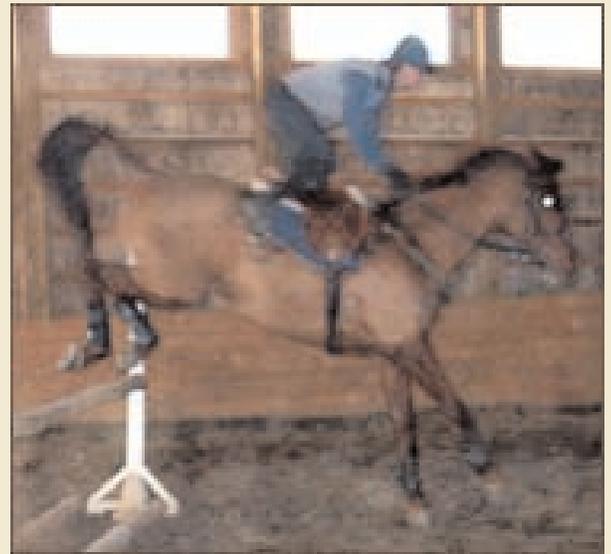
on the other side. If you're going to ride like this you'd better spend all your free time practicing staying on the mechanical bull at the local honky tonk. On the positive side, the rider's pants are still clean (which probably changed about three seconds after this photo was taken) and I like the way the blue hunt coat picks up the color of the blue flowers.



Pictures like this make me wish I had run away with the circus as a teenager. I could be swallowing swords, eating fire or doing any number of things less painful than having to look at photographs like this. Amazingly, the rider's body has remained in classic jumping position – it just happens to be on the wrong part of the horse. I'm impressed at how she's been able to maintain contact through her calf and equally impressed with her very correct automatic release. The horse's ears are up and he shows a pleasant expression for an animal that's basically being strangled by his passenger. An obvious follower of the philosophy 'if you don't know what you're doing, do it neatly' the rider is nattily attired and properly turned out for the impending afternoon funeral.



Just when I think it can't get any worse, it does. Here we have a rider (and I use the term 'rider' loosely) demonstrating something we don't get to see too often: the "no point" position. In fact, "no point" is a good theme for this month's column. As in, there is no point to this rider investing another minute of her time this sport. The one redeeming factor is that she's not catching the horse in the mouth. As for the horse....other than the fact that he looks like a fiery-eyed demon spawn, he's making a valiant effort to stay under his rider. I've got to learn not to look at these photos until I've put back a few more Coronas.



I'm not quite sure how this picture even happened. How does a horse get all four legs in the air on the LANDING side of a fence? The only way I can think of to accomplish this is to goose the horse with a cattle prod upon takeoff. Since I see no one with a cattle prod I'll have to assume the horse came to a screeching halt in front of the fence and then jumped anyway. Either that or the rider has

achieved the impossible and trained her horse to jump backwards. The really amazing thing is that in spite of the fact that the horse's legs look like four wheels of a shopping cart all going in different directions, the rider is actually showing very good form. Her heel is down, back flat, eyes up, and there's a nice straight line through her lower arm to the bit. I think maybe the black box should go across the horse's face in this case.

Good Lord. There are so many things I see wrong with this picture that I don't know where to start. This is a classic example of somebody who should take up a different sport. What, the bowling league wasn't accepting new members so he decided to try Grand Prix jumping? The fact that the poor horse is jumping like a praying mantis can be forgiven considering it is trying its best to get its rider's sorry arse to the other side of the fence without killing them both. This horse deserves a cabooseful of carrots. As for the rider, he should be.....hey.... waaaaaaaaait just a ding-dang minute!....This picture looks awfully familiar...Who's in charge of screening this stuff??



Here we have another student messing up one of my horses. Nice. Let's start out with what's good: the rider's heel is down. Now for what's not good: pretty much everything else. Back when I learned to ride they would take away our stirrups and reins and make us jump with our eyes closed until we could stay off the horse's back properly. And what is with the blue hat? Next thing you know everybody will be wearing those Ken and Barbie spurs with the rhinestones and crystals in them. Why not just get

your horse's ear pierced and buy HIM some bling bling jewelry too? It's bad enough that I have to look at purple saddlepads and leg wraps, now people have to have sparkly spurs. I'm sorry, what was I supposed to be talking about?

If "constipation" had a face, this would be it. A few more jumps as frightening as this one, though, and I'm pretty sure this rider will be having the opposite problem - it's fortunate that she chose to wear dark pants, this would have been a bad day to bring out the tighty whiteys. The red shirt will camouflage a lot of the blood stains that will result when the horse pulls down the back rail of this oxer, knocks himself in the shins and elects to plant his rider like a spike for involving him in this debacle. The horse is making a valiant effort to haul both his back end and his rider's over this oxer; his pleasant expression can only be attributed to the fact that he's already plotting his revenge. Why don't you just tie a sack of wet cement to the saddle? It would give the same result and you don't have to dress it up in an expensive outfit. While you haven't snagged your horse's mouth YET, those pesky laws of physics as you complete this arc is going to make giving him a molar-ectomy inevitable. The rubber reins will create an entertaining bungee-cord effect when the horse subsequently puts his head down to buck you off. Don't worry though, with that natty turnout your body is going to look absolutely smashing with a chalk outline around it.



Thank god SOMEbody in the barn knows how to ride. Pay attention, people. This is what you should look like. Back flat, eyes up, heels down, nice crest release. I wouldn't have so many grey hairs or need so much beer if more people rode like this. But good lord, can the horse be showing any LESS enthusiasm for his job? He can barely be bothered to pick his legs up. Okay, so the timing of the photo is a little late, but honestly, I've seen more enthusiasm from roadkill. How about working him through some gymnastics to improve his form? Or better yet, check him for a pulse before you get on him next time.

You have got to be kidding me. I don't know what horrifies me most about this photo - the pair's form, the color of the fence, or the fact that the rider's saddle pad and shirt match said fence. Was this the only paint leftover after some easter egg massacre? Last time I saw colors like that was after I ate some suspicious mushrooms back in the 1970s. The only good thing about this fence is that the garish colors draw the observer's eye away from the real train wreck. I'd be trying to hide my face behind the mane too if I was riding a horse with a doilie on its head. Did you get it off of the arm of a chair in Aunt Agnes's sitting room? Or was that the ONLY color bonnet they had in the \$5 sale bin at the tack shop? And I'd like to know which issue of Practical Horseman gave you the impression that the raspberry-sorbet colored shirt and pad ensemble was a good idea. Perhaps you should try showing in the Western divisions; I understand neon sequined catsuits are all the rage. Really, until you have more appropriate turnout and quit jumping the My Little Pony colored fences, it's going to be difficult for anyone to take you seriously as a rider. It's too bad, because your leg position is pretty solid even though your steed is making his best "my other job is a carousel horse" effort.



It's nice to see somebody who's not being a sissy. All you people who whine about the fences being "too big" when I raise the back rail higher than my ankle should take a look at what REAL jumping is. Pay attention, this is what three six looks like at the big shows. What is this rider looking at? Trust me, if he pulls that fence down he's gonna know it without having to peek over his shoulder like a girl checking out how her jeans make her butt look. Maybe he's looking for his hard hat. This is a great example of a horse and rider team that trusts each other implicitly. Either that or they are just really stupid.

Okay, I'm all for therapeutic riding programs, but Quasimodo here needs to find a new sport. I don't know if his hipbone ain't connected to his legbone or if he doesn't have a neck or if he was just put together from spare parts and re-animated, but....this is just all wrong. If this is your half-assed attempt to cue your horse that you want him to turn left, it isn't working. I can already see he's going to land on his right lead and will thereby split you like an atom when the laws of physics dictate that the horse goes right and you go left. I'm assuming by the strange angles your body appears to be fused into that this happens to you a lot. For starters, it might be a good idea to try looking between the horse's ears instead of at the chick in the tank top in the bleachers. Then get your butt back over the saddle, turn your toe out, and TRY to follow the horse's mouth in the air instead of looking like you're fiddling with your Blackberry. And if you don't want to end up with a career as a bell-ringer, you might want to consider some chiropractic work.



Sometimes it's all in the details. This month's rider demonstrates what happens when the details are abandoned in favor of the thrill of making your horse look as bad as possible. Are you jumping rope or jumping a fence? Stand up or sit down – pick one. Then maybe the "straight line" from the bit through the rein will end at your elbow instead of the North Star. I hope that thing tied around your waist is a seatbelt, because after a few more fences like that your faithful friend is gonna show you where the 'buck' in 'buckskin' came from. Your coat, your sleeves and your gloves have apparently been ripped off by the negative g-forces

generated by being this far behind the motion of your horse. At this rate you will be naked by the end of the course. Your horse can't seem to decide whether he wants to be a buckskin, a dun or an appaloosa, which makes him a good match for a rider who can't decide if she wants to be a jumper, an eventer or a statistic.

Hope somebody in this rider's immediate family is a chiropractor, because both she and old Whiplash there are gonna need some serious adjustment after this class. I can't quite decide if the rider is already in pain or is just anticipating it. If it's the latter, her intuition is dead on, because it doesn't take a clairvoyant to see that there's a world of hurt in her immediate future. While this is a very original way to interpret "eyes up, back flat and straight line from elbow to bit", the only other time I've ever seen a rider in this position was well after rigor mortis had set in. I normally don't recommend that exhibitors hit the margarita bar before competing, but in this case I'll make an exception. The rider needs to develop a more relaxed posture instead of looking like somebody forgot to remove the rectal thermometer. Despite having to deal with a flailing sandbag of a rider who makes the statues at the Hollywood Wax Museum look supple, the horse looks like an agreeable sort; no doubt he is used to galloping happily across the countryside by himself after his rider ditches herself at the first bank.



Photos like this that make me really hate my work. But probably not as much as the horse in this month's picture hates his. It's bad enough making the poor thing jump when he's only got two legs. But why add insult to injury by putting the great red-tailed fanny flopper on him? I'm sure your horse is really looking forward to having his spinal column rearranged by your seatbones on the landing side of that fence. Almost as much as he'll enjoy having your spur surgically removed from his ribcage. I'll bet horse chiropractors all over the country have your name on speed dial. All I can say is, it's a good thing god saw fit not to make horses meat eaters. As for your turnout... well, there's nothing better than a coat with a bright red lining if the message you want to get across is "Hey! Look over here and watch my butt smack my horse in the back." It'll also help the paramedics find your body after your horse bucks you ass-over-teakettle for making him take part in this stunt. The only thing worse would be to put a pair of stark white breeches with it. Oh...nevermind.

Geez, I was having a good day until I looked at this picture. I'm not even sure what to say, other than that I'm glad the photographer snapped this before you had a chance to soil yourself, because that's what would happen to ME if I got myself into a predicament like this. Which I wouldn't, because I can ride and you obviously can't. I used to say that if people didn't have the talent for the hunter or jumper ring they should do eventing, but you've made me rethink that philosophy. I can only imagine how you are at parallel parking if this is how you negotiate a simple cross country fence. Do they make curb feelers for horses? Perhaps if you weren't staring at your crotch you would have placed your horse to a better distance. He doesn't look terribly concerned, which leads me to believe that this happens to him a lot. One thing's for sure, if he wasn't a gelding before this event, he is now. I'm also willing to bet that the number on your back represents how many times you've been hauled off by the lifeflight helicopter to the nearest emergency room. Oh, and thanks for wearing your best purple and green polka dot attire, that really puts the finishing touch on this elegant picture. You'd better ask Santa Claus to bring you a bicycle or something safer to ride this Christmas, because I don't think "aptitude" is something he can deliver.



There's one of two explanations for this rider's leg position. Either he forgot his cup and is trying extra hard not to crush the family jewels, or his recent knee replacement surgery went horribly wrong. If you're gonna have your joints replaced, for god's sake spend the money to get the kind that articulate. Whatever the underlying cause, the rider is providing a textbook demonstration of the "no point" position. The horse looks to be pushing off for a fairly big fence and doesn't seem to be at all worried that there's room to fire a cruise missile between his rider's crotch and the pommel of the saddle. I'd really like to see what happened about two seconds after this photo was snapped. Either the rider wised up and got his heel down and a little angle in his leg, or he became a human javelin when the horse landed on the other side of the fence. My money's on the javelin. Way to go, Spike.

Okay, people. I have a college degree in English. I feel I have a better vocabulary than most and a pretty good command of the language. And yet, there are times when words completely fail me. Like when I look at this month's photo. All I've got to say is, when you were twelve years old, and Mrs. Jockstrap, the gym teacher, asked you what sport you might like to play – what the hell were you thinking? "Gee Mrs. Jockstrap, I'd like to ride horses, scare the hell out of them, give my parents premature gray hair and make trainers all over the world quit their jobs." Is that about how the conversation went? Despite the fact that your horse looks like you just put a bubble wrap saddle pad on it and then sat down too hard, you're doing a pretty good job of saving face. Your leg position isn't half bad, and your back is fairly straight. I can't be sure, but it looks like you're either using your cell phone or vomiting into a cup. Good thing you're grabbing the mane, you're gonna need it in another moment – along with a change of underwear. If you're gonna ride like this you'd better invest regularly in the 12-packs of tighty whities at Costco.



I'm all for making a beeline for the Beer Tent, but not at the cost of causing bodily harm to myself and others. You know that thing they put around the jumping arena? It's called a fence. It's meant to keep your dumb ass on the course off of the spectator berm. I can't see your horse's front end, but the fact that he's dragging some poor soccer dad to his death makes it clear that he's not following through behind. I don't think there was this much carnage during the chariot race in Ben Hur. You may as well just attach rotating sawblades to your stirrups and take everybody out. It would be nice if you had worn a coat, although that's just one more piece of clothing the paramedics would have to cut off of you to resuscitate you. What I can see of your boots and tack look shiny, good for you. But maybe you should spend less time cleaning your equipment and more time learning to freakin' steer.

This month we're privileged to have a photo of a rider who is truly mucking up the entire jumping experience. While not ideal, the roundness in her back will come in handy during the tuck-and-roll phase of the jump, which will happen as soon as the horse touches down and bucks her off for involving it in this stunt. While there is not a name for this style of non-release, the rider is still maintaining a straight line from elbow to bit. Interestingly, if you continue this line it will take you right into the dirt on the other side of the fence. Coincidence? I think not. I usually don't like it when the standard obscures part of the rider, but in this case I'd just as soon it was covering up the whole debacle. I can only imagine this is the same reason the horse has its eyes shut. And for the love of Mike, if you're not gonna braid the mane, howzabout GRABBING some of it next time? And people wonder why trainers drink.

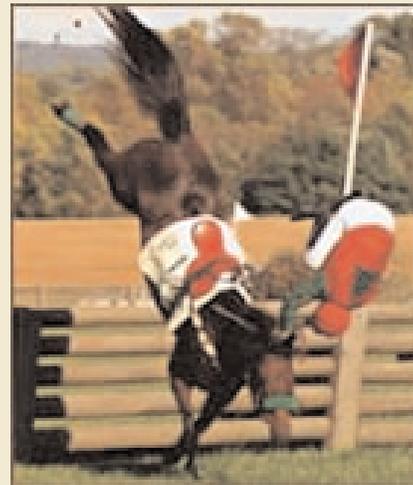


Oh, this is great. Not only do I have to deal with a bunch of clowns in my lessons, now I have the Three Stooges to critique. It looks like their outfits came from the bargain bin at the dollar store so it's no wonder they can't afford real jump poles. Unless they're Polish – that would mean the man on the horse really is jumping a Pole. It doesn't look like the rider is wearing a hard hat, but I am more concerned about the fellow standing on his head. This Pole should definitely be wearing a jump cup. I can only assume the two Poles on the

sides are following standard procedure. Get it? Poles, standards....never mind. I really don't know how to evaluate this other than to say that it's a shining example of why the Germans outride us at every damned Olympic Games.

First impressions are extremely important. Unfortunately, the only impression this rider is going to make is on the ground.

One can only wonder what bone-headed move he made to get into this predicament, but I'm guessing it had something to do with Two for One night at the beer tent. This photo is an excellent example of the unyielding laws of physics. What goes up, comes down. A body in motion tends to stay in motion. A body at rest tends to stay at rest, particularly after it strikes a solid object, like the ground, at speed. Finally, the most important rule of physics: two masses cannot occupy the same space at the same time, which horse and rider are about to discover. Impending demise aside, this pair doesn't look too bad. The rider's back is flat, there's a good angle in his leg and he's doing a nice long release. The horse is in good flesh, well-groomed and turned out and will look wonderful when the taxidermist gets done with him. I'm not quite sure how the flag came to be where it is, but man, that's gotta hurt.



This is a classic example of why you should confirm your horse's flight plans before taking off ahead of him. However, if your riding goals include putting the children of your local maxillofacial surgeon through medical school, this is the way to accomplish it. I can't see your leg but would bet the farm that it is not in the "on" position. Judging by your soft following hand (which is exemplary, by the way, you'll be the talk of the ER Trauma Unit) you never even saw this train wreck coming. While you are recovering in the hospital and have nothing better to do than play around on your computer, I suggest you google "Legs, Seat: Use of When

Approaching a Fence" and see if you can comprehend the error of your ways. As for your turnout, the red coat was a good choice; it won't show the blood stains. Oh, and you might just get your money's worth out of that hoity-toity \$500 helmet if it keeps your nose from exiting the back of your head. You might also want to think about tipping the guys on the jump crew who have to stay behind after the show to look for your teeth.