

REINING MANEOUVERS TRAINING SERIES

We ask ORHA's top Trainers to take on one of the reining manoeuvres, outline common problems or issues and offer us some advice on how to correct these issues.

RUNNING IN CIRCLES

By Harvey Stevens



Photo: River Bend Designs

1. Describe the ideal reining circle?

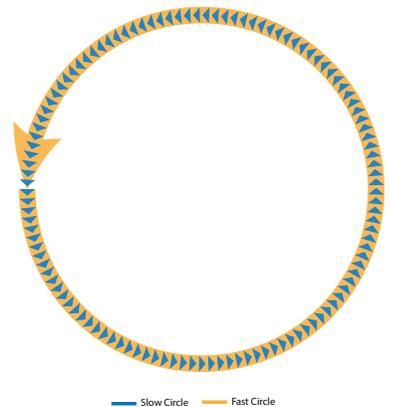
The ideal circle to me, should look like a sideways "D". The straight line through the middle will allow you to change leads, slow down or stop your horse on a straight line, not a curve or angle. The horse should have a slight bend in the neck and poll going either direction. The rider should be sitting in the middle of the horse's back; this allows the horse to be balanced and comfortable to perform the job at hand.

2. What are common mistakes or difficulties you have seen others make while performing circles?

- During the transition from a large fast circle to a small slow circle, often the horse drops its shoulder in, and falls into the smaller circle.
- Another problem area is when the rider tries to lope faster than the horse's comfort zone.

3. How could they fix/correct these problems/issues?

- Always lope 2 styles of circles. #1 –Lope a large fast circle, do not steer into a small circle once you've asked for the slowdown. Stay in a large slow. This allows the horse to stay straight and comfortable. #2 – Lope small circles separate from the fast ones. Make sure the horse is steering and relaxed to do so.
- Find a speed your horse is comfortable at that still enables the horse to slow down without creating problems.



Additional Comments:

Circles are a large part of the reining pattern and need to be performed with little to no apparent resistance. As long as a horse guides and is willing to allow the rider to dictate every move you will have good circles.

MAKING THE RIGHT TRACKS

By Loris Epis

1. Describe the ideal reining stop?

The ideal reining stop should be effortless and natural. The horse should be crunched in a sitting position while the front legs are pedaling like crazy. The horse's neck should be arched and the rider should be sitting deep and relaxed in the saddle. Hands lower on the neck to show how the horse can willingly complete the maneuver. The slide itself should feel like floating on water or any other cool sport where you get a chill!

2. What are common mistakes or difficulties you have seen others make while performing stops?

One of the most common mistakes I find, is riders riding with the stirrup length too long! As you approach the stops, your legs and feet are looking for the stirrups in order to compensate for your body weight, which follows the horse's back movement. A proper length of stirrups will help balance you and free up your horse during the slide. (continues on page 7)



Photo: Anne Lorimer

MAKING THE RIGHT TRACKS (continued from page 5)

Moving on to the maneuver itself, mistakes start with the corner that comes before the rundown. You'll need to make sure the turn that sets you on the straight line is a 90 degree corner (NOT 80° - 90°!). If you don't turn the corner square with your horse's shoulders up, your rundown will immediately start crooked; the horse will not be between the reins or your legs, which enables him to push one way or the other. Rundowns, slides, rollback and backups are scored as one maneuver, so everything starts with the rundowns. I see way too many people holding their horse back, then at the last minute blaze it to the stops. Or others start their rundowns already in fifth gear (out of control) making the end result a disaster in most cases. The rundowns should be a gradual insert of gears (just like a car) and should end with the slide at top speed.

A reining horse should slide just from lifting your hand, without the use of your voice (whoa) or the other way around, just voice and no hands. To do this, you must have a proper program that allows you to develop softness throughout the maneuvers. This is one of the most important and most valuable lessons. Another thing I see is riders walking away from a slide and not reinforcing the meaning of whoa! I do this by backing up the horse a few steps, if it's a reminder, or a little more if it's a correction. A lot of horses have been introduced to the stop way too late in the training. It's a maneuver that should be worked and taught alongside all the other maneuvers, according to the horse's pace, learning ability and talent. In short, most problems people have in the stops are caused by impatience, not having a program and a lack of softness. It's important to have a solid program that is based on consistency and geared for the horse.

3. How could they fix/correct these problems/issues?

I gave you a pretty good idea to how your program should look like in the previous question. To help you correct your horse or the problems that you or your horse are having I should mention, I keep my 2 year olds in a snaffle for the whole year and big part of their 3 year old year as well. I do this, first to teach them how to do it in a snaffle correctly and then when the maneuver is solid and soft, I go to a bit. Teach your horse how to be drawn into the ground properly and gently, don't scare him, be patient and keep in mind a proper use of the acceleration in the rundown. Corners are the first thing to worry about it. Use a professional trainer to help you spot the issues you are having and how to solve them.

4. Describe an exercises we could do at home to aid in making our Stops better?

There are many exercises for stops, as for any maneuver. One that I do frequently is to use diagonals instead of straight lines, so I don't teach my horse how to lean. This way I can keep him soft at the end of each line without compromising the patterns. Start with the proper form of a diagonal, use your inside lead and at the end of each rundown turn the horse into a tiny circle, keeping him soft and rounded. Control the shoulders and rib cage, by this I mean they should not be diving into the circle. So, up and straight and then off again through the diagonal in a straight line. I make sure I work my gears and at the end of the line put them back into a tiny circle again while softening the horse's face and body (another reason to shorten your stirrups, if they are too long you can't work the horse's body and rib cage properly and you won't get the correct result). Only after I achieve good consistent results in diagonals, will I start training an end to end line, like the patterns require. At this point my horse should be broke enough in the stops to not make many mistakes, which will keep the pattern cleaner and with less anticipation.

