

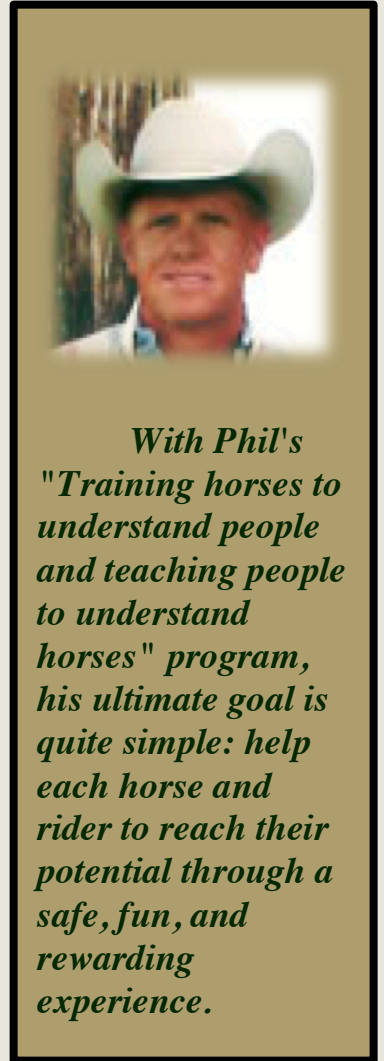
“A Well-Oiled Machine”

The first week in June I had a horsemanship clinic at my training facility and then I spent the third week of June in Bozeman, MT working with the trainers at the beautiful Copper Spring Ranch. During this three-week period I had the opportunity to work with a variety of horsemen and horsewomen at various stages in their learning and development as horse trainers.

As I reflect back, I found one glaring similarity in most of these trainers; in most cases more attention had been given to the parts of the horse's body in front of the saddle horn (head, neck, and shoulders) than the horse's body parts behind the saddle horn (ribcage and hindquarters). The ribcage and hindquarters had been somewhat neglected--these parts were somewhat stuck or even locked up in some cases. This challenge became even more glaring when I returned home to work the colts we have in training at our training facility. My assistant trainer had been diligently working these colts while I was away. When I started working these colts I noticed right away that their lateral and vertical flexion was good, their turnarounds were pretty good, and their ribcage and hindquarters were stiff, tight, and in a case or two a little locked up. This situation is easily fixed; we addressed it immediately and unlocked these body parts to match the flexibility and movement of the head, neck, and shoulders in each of these colts. However, it did make me realize how easy it is to neglect these body parts while training your horse.

My goal with every horse is to train their mind to “think” and find the response I am asking for. I want to have complete control of their head, neck, shoulders, ribcage, and hindquarters. I want these body parts to be a “well-oiled machine”. It is just human nature that we pay more attention to what is in front of us and less attention to what is behind us. I encourage all of you trainers out there to make an effort to give all five of your horse's body parts the same amount of attention as you stair-step through the training process. If your horse understands what responses you are asking for, and you gain complete control of its five body parts, you will have a horse that has the potential to become a “well-oiled machine”.

Always remember that having a well-trained horse is a journey not a destination. Pay attention to the details and you will help your horse reach its potential. Hope you're having a great summer and I'll see you down the road.



“A horse's potential is limited only by our knowledge”

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