

Controlling Your Horse's "Drivers"

by Phil Haugen



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Photo credit Chelsea Kroes

I think that it's just human nature that we spend the majority of our time working on controlling and communicating with the parts of the horse's body that are in front of the saddle horn. These are the body parts we can easily see and feel. Early in my training career I did the same thing. It didn't take me long to figure out that to have complete control and communication with the front end of the horse, I needed to have complete control and communication with the hindquarters / "Drivers" of that horse. The head, neck, and shoulders are the parts of the horse's body that determine the direction we go. The hindquarters / "Drivers" are the parts of the horse's body that drive the other body parts forward in the direction they are asked to go. Ideally we

want to communicate with the horse's hindquarters with our reins and our legs just as we do with the other parts of the body. To do this we practice a simple exercise daily with all of our performance horses, whether they are futurity prospects or more finished rodeo horses. The key to this exercise is developing that soft response with your rein and your leg to achieve that hindquarter disengagement with the slightest pressure. We need our horse to understand that we need them to position their hindquarters to optimize their speed and power so as to keep smooth forward motion during a run. If we can keep our horse balanced on their hindquarters and in position to easily propel the rest of the horse's body forward, we can achieve that smooth

forward motion and always remember, "smooth is fast". Controlling your horse's hindquarters is a prerequisite to being able to side pass, two-track, change leads, and position your horse for a turn or movement laterally while making a run. This exercise definitely benefits our barrel horses but it is also extremely beneficial to our calf roping and team roping horses. I explain how to practice hindquarter disengagement on the video clip included. If you have any questions drop me an email or give me a call. Have a great month!

Phil

