

LIFTING SHOULDERS *with*

Fred Hunter

Once you get bend and flex on your horse and can keep a level and correct nose position, lifting the shoulder is not that difficult.

However this part of the four-part equation in the turn is seldom, if ever, used - and when tried it's generally applied incorrectly.

As we have covered in previous newsletters barrel racing is a direct rein discipline-this means that when you turn a barrel to the right you need to control or turn with the right rein. The problem with shoulders arises with the approach to the barrel or in the turn itself.

The most common way barrel racers prevent the horse from dropping the shoulder is to hold a horse off with the opposite rein. This works - but only for a very short time in the career of the barrel horse. It's a very unique horse that will work over an extended period using this method. Many barrel horse careers are ended sooner by using this method than by age or injury.

The problem that arises is that no matter how strong you hold with the outside rein the horse will win and eventually start to hit the barrel and even if you make it by the barrel because of the body position of the horse the turn is slow.

Another flaw that generally ends a career is the horse duck-

ing in front of the barrel. You as well as I have seen some very talented horses never reach their potential because of the shoulder issues.

When explaining how to lift a shoulder keep two things in mind - up and forward - barrel racing is based on these two principles. You are always moving forward and the horse always needs to stay up in the front. When riding and doing circles - I am working the horse from the tip of the nose to the cinch area or where my leg contacts the horse. One should while sitting straight up in the saddle and circling to the right, be able to see the right tip of the nose and the corner of the right eye - this is created with bend or flex. The nose needs to be out and leading but never elevated. The position of the nose is created by balance in the poll. This is developed and maintained by the use of the correct bits and I prefer draw reins as opposed to English or a German martingale. It's important to always use the right tools to enhance the progress in your training.

When circling and using a direct rein, the palm of the rein hand is flat to the ground also being forward and several inches above the saddle horn. Now, to move the shoulder that hand position is changed, you roll the palm up with the rein rolling within the hand, moving the hand towards the neck but not

touching the neck and lift from the elbow to wrist as in an arm curl. At this time you bump the horse with the same leg as your rein hand, all the while you never lose the bend or the position of the nose. This is called an indirect move; only ask your horse for 2 to 4 steps to begin with and advance from there. (See video-page 2). Make sure that your horse hasn't straightened out in the body or elevated the nose. Once you and your horse have become accomplished in this there are a number of maneuvers you can do to enhance the softness of the horse. Again, see video.

Most riders get confused with the shoulder lift by either doing it with incorrect hand position or being instructed wrong. Example: Many people are told to ride with hands down and close to the neck. Problem: The closer your hands, and the further back towards the saddle they come, you affect the horse in a different way; you cause collection and lose forward motion and disengage the hip, or create a side pass.

Western pleasure, reining, and dressage horses are all ridden with hands in this low position. Again up and forward is the answer for the barrel horse.

Two things are accomplished when the horse is trained to lift

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his shoulder. First is the approach to the barrel, you can maintain the correct distance in this approach with a direct rein as opposed to pulling with the outside rein. Second is within the turn itself you can keep the horse's shoulder up while turning tight and not hitting the barrel.

Barrel racing continues to evolve and become more competitive. As a barrel racer you need to evolve with your training program to stay in the competitive edge.

Trainers in any discipline will tell you that the key to their success always begins with that completely broke horse.

UTAH RANCHES
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ABOUT FRED HUNTER

From my youth I have always had the desire to train the horse, not only was I given this gift but I was fortunate to find Nancy who also had these same desires. Being self-taught I have trained several types of horses such as reiners, pleasure, snaffle bit, rope and cutting horses. The cutting horses seemed perfect as the cattle and style of this discipline fit me well. For the last twenty years I have had great success with this type of horse.

***"I can truly say my very best friends
have been my horses"***

With the push from Nancy I have evolved from cutters to exclusively training barrel horses - mainly her barrel horses. With the background of cutting I have brought to the barrel horse industry something that is unique and successful. With my techniques of Level Training and Nancy's abilities to understand and apply them, the results speak for themselves.

Nancy and I currently reside in Neola, Utah. Between the two of us we have raised four good boys who have learned through the horse world the value of hard work, discipline, motivation, success and satisfaction from a job well done. I can truly say my very best friends have been my horses.

