

The Next 50 **Barrel Racing Exercises** *for Precision on the Pattern*

Chapter Four - First Barrel Finesse

I know how frustrating going by the first barrel can be. When you feel like you've tried a million things, and it continues to happen repeatedly, it changes you. You start to second guess-yourself and overthink even more. It's hard to ride well when you're stuck in your head, wondering just how much you should let your horse go and when you should ask for rate. Wouldn't it be better (and a lot less stressful) to make it more automatic? To trust your horse and be confident when you head to the first barrel? *That'd be nice* – right?

After taking a long break from competition to rehab my barrel horse from an injury, bring my first three books to life, *and* get settled in our Texas home, it was time to venture out and enter up. I was in completely new territory. While we don't exactly live in a barrel racing hot spot, you *can't not* go to a local jackpot down south and not have someone "famous" enter (and usually win). I was intrigued and I watched them closely. One of the biggest takeaways was noticing the sheer energy, quickness, agility and athleticism in which these top barrel racers rode. I knew I needed more of what they had.

It's not that we haven't all witnessed NFR barrel racers have a bad run, because *it does* happen. But *what is it* that these "toughs" have that the majority doesn't? For one, it became obvious to me that these gals weren't entering on horses that were borderline ready to go; they were entering on horses ready to win and were certainly riding to win. Although these top barrel racers weren't always necessarily on aged, finished horses, they sure seemed to ride like they were. There wasn't any timidity or over-thinking as they launched toward the first barrel, and their timing was impeccable. They had obviously set these horses up for success, trusted their training, and it showed!

Being a dedicated student of horsemanship and barrel racing, and studying the ways of successful trainers and jockeys has helped me discover and experience some "secrets" to nailing the first barrel. They're secrets largely because it's not common knowledge. Even barrel racers with many accomplishments under their belt still struggle at times. There are certain identifiable patterns, though; the same handful of things that get in the way of nailing the "money barrel." What I want for you – is to have the ability to prepare a horse and give them *all* the ingredients for a successful first barrel turn, so that you can enthusiastically hustle them there and they'll *hook it* reliably. Just *imagine* now what that would feel like! (*It's FUN!*)

In the preceding chapters of *The Next 50 Barrel Racing Exercises for Precision on the Pattern*, I addressed the emotional, physical and mental components necessary for getting your horses focused and taking responsibility for their job on the pattern. In the exercises that follow, I've shared how you can specifically train and condition for even more consistent rate, plus power and snap around the first that carries all the way to the second and beyond. To begin though, I shared a mental exercise – a checklist to make absolutely certain you've eliminated *all* the obstacles in the way of a less than stellar first barrel. These are the not so obvious things that cause a horse to *not want* to turn, that no exercise will ever fix. There is so much more to nailing the first barrel than getting our horse's body around it. The process requires thorough analysis, understanding and preparation. We invest our best into barrel racing; if we want our runs to pay off - the "money barrel" deserves nothing less!

Exercise 16 – First Things First

Description

It's only fitting to dive deep into addressing the biggest and most common problem at the first barrel, which is *going by it*. But before we attempt to fix issues here by way of training or retraining our horse's body and mind, it makes sense to first take an even closer look at what might be interfering. The six-point checklist below includes common reasons why horses have trouble cranking the first barrel, which are all critical elements to review considering they are much *less commonly* recognized and addressed.

Purpose

If any of these (or other) areas are the actual culprit for first barrel issues, we only risk building more resentment and bad habits by overlooking them. This ends up creating unnecessary emotional trauma and anxiety, contributing to negative associations that can continue to affect our horses (and us) long after the initial reason they *can't* or *don't want to* turn is resolved. Let's correct and avoid that, starting now!

How-to

Your First Barrel Checklist



Notice the most subtle signs of discomfort.

Ulcers – It's not just hot, nervous horses that get and have stomach ulcers. You can be doing everything right to minimize stress and support digestive health, but that doesn't mean your horses are immune. Some of the most common symptoms of ulcers are not keeping weight on, poor topline, tail swishing, they may be overly sensitive to touch, cinchy or especially reactive, and tend to get quite anxious at times of stress (such as at the gate). Considering that the hind gut (while less common than stomach ulcers) is positioned on the right body wall, it might not be a coincidence that so many barrel horses especially struggle with the first barrel.

Feet & Joints – Just because a horse doesn't show discomfort when loping circles doesn't mean he doesn't experience it in a run. Just because he isn't refusing the turn (yet), doesn't mean soreness isn't causing him to go a couple strides by to delay a sting of discomfort. If you've been troubleshooting the first barrel for a handful of weeks or runs, it's well past time to work with *the best vets.* and bodyworkers – ones that embrace resolving challenging cases vs. masking them. Do what it takes to invest in troubleshooting. Be open to second opinions and management changes to ensure your horse is truly sound and free of pain.



Disengagement can be a sign of soreness.

Teeth – When it comes to eliminating resistance to bit pressure and helping a horse maximize his athleticism, proper dental work can't be undervalued. When the movement of a horse's jaw is inhibited, it contributes to "stuck" places through the rest of the body as well, which can be thought of as a system of levers and pulleys that affect each other. Anywhere there is resistance there will be compensation, and even more related resistance found elsewhere. Consider having your horse's teeth balanced once a year, with six-month check-ups when you're actively competing and absolutely need your horses at their best.



Freedom and comfort is necessary for rate.

Saddle Fit – I recently had the opportunity to ride in a treeless saddle. Although the one I tried didn’t suit my preferences as a jockey, I appreciated the experience because I was surprised by just how much I could feel my horse’s back flex, round and move under me. While even distribution of our weight is important, it was eye opening to realize just how many saddles don’t allow for this freedom of movement, and also drastically restrict the shoulders. A horse won’t be able to fully stretch out to run or want to gather up for the first barrel if the saddle doesn’t offer a comfortable fit that allows for pain-free and comfortable, extended range of motion.

Riding – Your horse’s ability to position his body in a way that makes the first barrel turn *easy* has a lot to do with how he carries his weight. Due to the nature of barrel racing, it’s easy for a horse to lean to the inside and on his front end. It’s our job to instill habits of moving that are more elevated in the front end and balanced from side to side. The ideal position for the rider’s weight in my opinion is close to equal in the stirrups or a smidge more to the outside. Your horse will tend to go where your weight is, so if you’re not cranking the first barrel, expand your awareness and take steps to teach *your own body* to keep your stirrups more evenly weighted.



If we lean forward, the horse will also.

Headgear – The way a bit functions affects your horse’s position in different and specific ways that can make all the difference for rating and turning. The first step in bit selection is knowing your horse and knowing yourself. How does your horse use his body, what are his tendencies? What are *your* tendencies? What do you need more of on the pattern? The right bit can help make up for some of what we and our horses lack, and there’s nothing like barrel racing to put it all to the test. Combined with a high level education, the right bit can be icing on the cake that helps a well-educated horse reach peak performance.

First Barrel Checklist	Ulcers	Feet and Joints	Saddle Fit	Teeth	Riding	Headgear
<i>Put it to the Test – Some Ideas for Analyzing and Creating Your Perfect Position</i>	Experiment by giving your horse 60 cc of Maalox 3x/day for several days. If you see a change, start an ulcer protocol.	Is your horse a little slow out of his stall, tender on hard ground, tail swishy, or bouncy in the turns? If so, see a good vet.	Is your horse’s back sore on palpation? Is the pressure even under your saddle? If not, time to try something new.	Check your dentist’s techniques and credentials. If your horse’s teeth are overdue, make an appointment.	Trot around your first barrel without stirrups: - which way do you slide? Do you sit deep to cue for the turn in a run?	Study bit function. Does your horse tend to over-run or rate? Are you heavy or light handed? (Also see page 114.)
<i>Your Resolution – Make Notes for Carrying Out Your Action Plans!</i>						

Exercise 17 – Position Perfection

Description

If you've ever felt that you might be doing more harm than good by fidgeting around with getting a perfect start position in the alley, you're not alone. After all, when our horse is anxious and anticipating, it's hard to know whether we should insist on perfection and potentially cause their anxiety and our position to get even worse, or just roll with it and take what we can get. It's challenging to effectively jockey a dragon as you "walk on eggshells," all while considering how your subtle actions will affect the run ahead and many more down the road. But I encourage you not to settle for poor position. Although you may have to accept what you can get as far as position in the moment, it's *always possible* to work toward better. Again, it all starts with making absolutely sure there's not a physical reason your horse is blocking you out, but that he understands his responsibilities and has every reason to yield his body and thoughts to your hands and legs at the gate. It requires a strong foundation of education and emotional fitness. When the physical, mental and emotional elements are solid, perfect position becomes simply a matter of perfect practice!

Purpose

It's not that we can't have a great run even with a poor start in the alley – it is possible! But it's *much more likely* when you're set up for success from the get-go. Why not put the odds more in your favor? When you're clear on what the ideal first barrel position is, and have dissolved any obstacles in the way, a smooth take off and crisp, fast turn is the inevitable result. That's what the exercise below will give you.

How-to

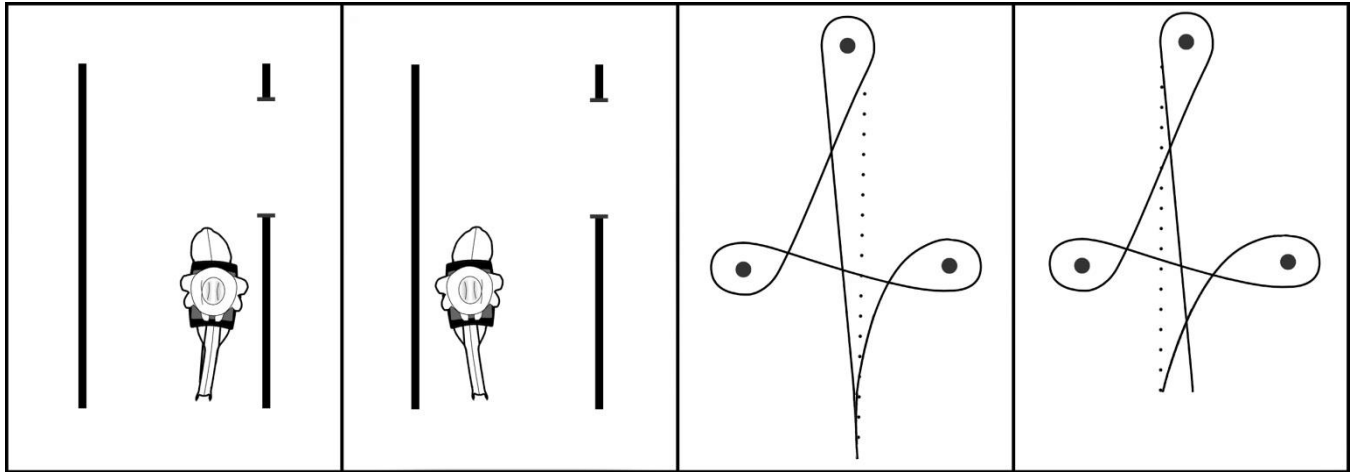
Before you expect a very specific body position in the alley, take an even closer look at the mental, emotional and physical components we started exploring in the previous exercise to ensure your horse is completely capable of, prepared and willing to deliver the high level performance you're expecting of him.

	My Horse is...	✓	My Action Steps:
Mental	<i>Educated, soft, understanding, confident, responsive</i>		
	<i>Confused, dull, resistant, delayed, unsure, scattered</i>		
Emotional	<i>Calm, connected, thinking, focused, motivated</i>		
	<i>Distracted, excitable, reactive, hesitant, tense, anxious</i>		
Physical	<i>Fluid, flexible, engaged, quick, supple, strong, willing</i>		
	<i>Choppy, short, rough, stiff, slow, weak, argumentative</i>		

The Ideal Body Position – As we leave for the first barrel, it's ideal to position our horse's body in a way that subtly mimics the position we'll want as we turn the first barrel. We want our horse in our hands, engaged through the hind end, slightly elevated in the front end, with a subtle lateral nose to tail arc, and to further support this position – even an angle to the body that helps keep weight in all the areas that make it easier to pick up the correct lead. We certainly won't *always* have *all* these characteristics perfect every trip down the alley, but they are *all* worth shooting for in the long run. Keep your standards high!

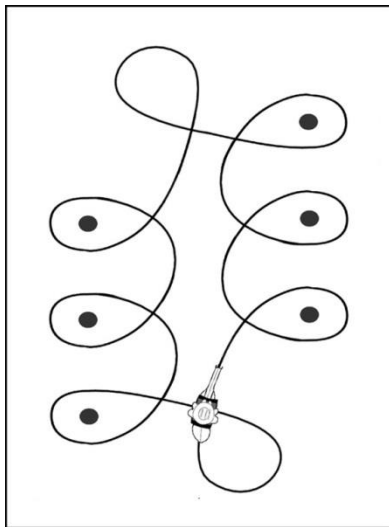
The Ideal Foot Position – You may notice NFR gals who go to the right barrel first, after entering from the tunnel, they will go over to the far right of the alley then arc down the left side of the alley as they approach the first barrel. The setup as they come from the tunnel to the alley puts the horse in a position that is the opposite of what most want on the way to the barrel (unless they're lefties; then it's perfect!). This makes it particularly challenging because the horse's body will be arced to one side, then it must arc to the other.

There are always ways to overcome these challenging setups if you have control and connection to your horse's body and mind. Another option, for example, would be to enter the alley hindquarters first, keeping weight on the inside (right hind); and yet another would be to enter nose first then perform a spin back around to the right, again putting weight on that right hind leg to set the horse's body up for the first barrel.



NFR entry to right barrel first. NFR entry to left barrel first. Start position long approach. Start position short approach.

To switch gears – when presented with a long run to the first barrel, I like to start my run lined up just to the right side of the third barrel (if going right first; see dotted line). I'll run straight, and then starting about 25 feet before the first barrel (see diagram in Exercise 12 – Measured Improvement) make a smooth gradual arc as I approach. On a pattern with a short run to the first barrel, I will start further to the left, lined up just to the left side of the first barrel, giving myself a less straight and more gradual arc, making the approach easier than a sudden “button hook,” which is a more physically difficult angle for a horse with so little room to prepare. Angling my horse's rear end toward the direction of whatever barrel I go to first will help lift the inside front leg and weight the hind end for the correct lead. In a perfect world, I like the idea of actually starting completely square and balanced, however, when energy is high and our horse is on the muscle, we may have to offer them a little more direction to make it as easy as possible to achieve the position we want.



Armed with some new insights and considerations, now it's time to practice your perfect first barrel setup and approach position repetitively and without the stress of a “hot spot,” as shown in the diagram at right. Once your horse is familiar with responding and performing in the specific way you ask in this exercise, he'll be better prepared to make the connection and do so on the actual barrel pattern and then in competition. As with anything else, only after performing this exercise for several sessions, would you then put it to the test in slow work on the pattern at home, and gradually make your way to testing and tweaking in a run. No matter how far along your horse is, you can always improve and refine their approach to the first barrel for smoother turns and faster times!

Exercise 18 – Mix it Up

Description

Part of the problem with the first barrel is what's going on in (or *not* going on) our horse's head as they sprint toward it. This really applies when troubleshooting, whether in a run or when slow working the pattern. Horses easily make assumptions, so it's our responsibility to prevent this. However, if we (or someone else) has allowed them to develop a less than ideal habit, it becomes our responsibility to interrupt these patterns. Sometimes the pattern (habit) we want to change is more mental, or it can be related to physical positioning; most times it's both. You'll find solutions to all of these problems below.

Purpose

Implementing an exercise that mimics the approach to the first barrel and requires the same kind of position but in slightly different context (such as the previous one), works by loosening up the associations our horses make in their minds, creating the opportunity to rewire the actual habits when we *do* return to the pattern. The idea is to have the simulation exercise similar and yet different. We want to get proficient enough that our horses can make a connection once we head back to the pattern in slow work, when they might revert to their old ways. Then we can communicate, *"Nope! This new way of thinking/moving/using your body applies here too, remember?"* In time, we can merge the two and leave the old, less desirable habits behind as we trade them for more powerful, correct and consistent form and function.

How-to



The UNPredictable Pattern – With your barrel pattern set up as usual, start at the opposite end of the arena and approach your “Mixed Up” first barrel to the right *or* left (see diagram A. – you can go to either way depending on how much you need to mix it up!). Approaching the pattern in this way will be potentially confusing to your horse and require extra focus on positioning for both of you; that's the point! This helps to keep your horse's attention more on you and you're less likely to deal with the positioning issues you typically experience at the first barrel. Really take the

opportunity to strengthen the position and everything about the first barrel turn you want here, so that you can get it so well developed that your horse can make the connection when you return to approaching the pattern normally. Make sure your eyes are looking where you want to go, that your weight is balanced, that your horse is driving from behind, that his shoulders are elevated and he's responsive to your feel. Circle your “first barrel” until you're happy with your horse's response and position, then finish the pattern so your horse realizes you are indeed working THE pattern.

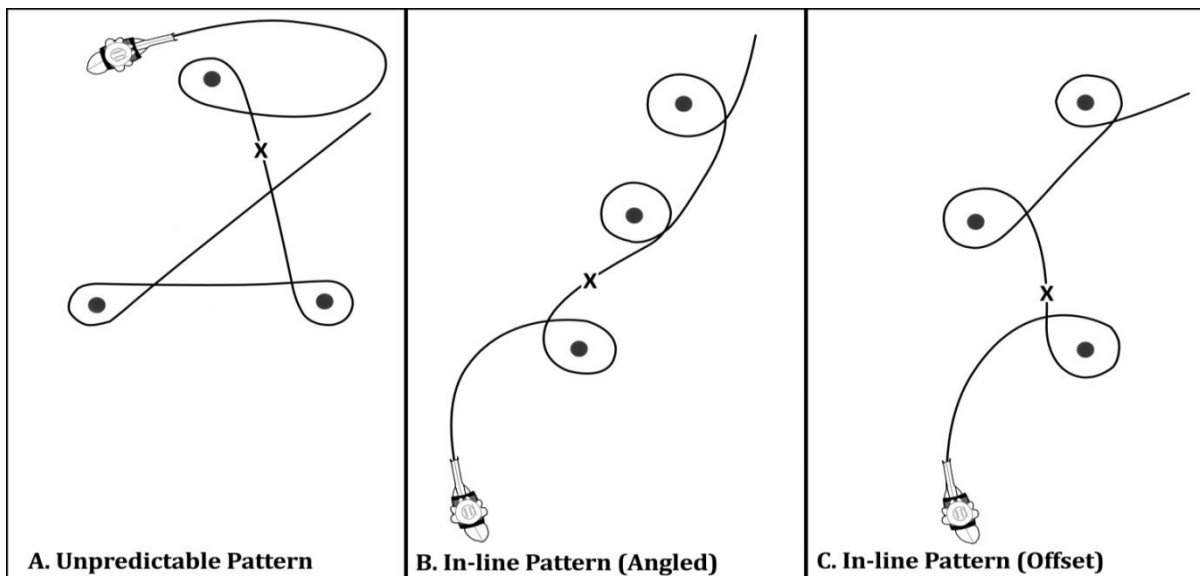
When a horse seems to be taking over and calling the shots, it's important that we remain unattached emotionally, remembering that it was *us* who essentially failed the horse in order for the habit to develop. Also, keep a positive spin on the problem by considering that a horse's

tendency for volunteering to do the wrong thing can be easily channeled into responsibility and enthusiasm for doing the right thing. “Mixing it up” isn’t done in a way that has to include harsh corrections or force, but by simply changing the subject, and causing the wrong thing to be difficult and what we want to be easy. This doesn’t mean we won’t need to be quick or firm at times, but the goal is to simply loosen the mental attachment that *we* allowed them to develop. We don’t have to beat ourselves up for making mistakes and having to correct them, but we should always be thinking about how to learn, take responsibility, and avoid them going forward.

In-line Pattern – With three barrels set up in a diagonal line approximately 30 feet apart, either centered down the arena or slightly offset (B.), head toward the first barrel with positioning that mimics your actual approach when on the pattern. After completing that turn, change your horse’s bend and circle the following two barrels the other direction. Feel free to mix this up even further by starting in the other direction; but in each case do the first barrel one way, and the other two the other direction. Feel free to start at a trot, graduating to a lope with a simple lead change; and as you advance include a flying change in between the first and second barrel.



The focus here is perfecting your approach to the first barrel; the angles and footfall you’re asking for, and the position of your horse’s body. These exercises are done with the purpose of interrupting a habit that your horse has associated with the actual barrel pattern, to take away anticipation, and to create new mental and physical movement patterns. Be particular and specific, and eventually you can move the barrels further apart (C.) to more closely simulate the pattern itself, and to make the transition even easier, making it less likely your horse will default back to old habits. Avoid getting in a rush, but honestly assess and test your horse’s understanding and responsibility by allowing him a little more slack in the rein to *show you* what he’s learned.



Exercise 19 – Stop and Circle

Description

In many cases, horses have been allowed to run away in more ways than one (again, starting at a walk), while simultaneously over time have also been inadvertently taught to push through and ignore the rider's body language, *and* bit pressure; or perhaps never thoroughly educated to respond and yield to it well from the start. Some "hotter" horses are also more prone to losing their focus (and educational understandings) when speed is added. A more right-brain, sensitive horse becomes reactive quicker than a more naturally laid back horse. With their survival instincts closer to the surface, we have to devote ourselves to building their confidence and make sure that when we ask them to "get gone" (run full speed) physically, that they stay with us and don't leave mentally. It takes time, timing, patience, understanding and lots of going back and forth from speed to mental connection and back again in order to join the two together. So many horses that run off at the first barrel are long gone mentally, and their body simply follows. The exercise below is a valuable one especially for a horse with a lot of try and enthusiasm for racing to the first barrel, but not as much for staying mentally connected, and in a thinking, rating and responding frame of mind.

Purpose

In barrel racing and in life, we tend to get more of what we focus on. We get better at what we practice. The more a horse practices running to the first barrel without thinking and responding to the rider or turning with good form, the better he gets at it. The more exposures the horse has, the more time it will take to correct. The purpose of Stop and Circle is to interrupt the habit of running without thinking, making it helpful for instilling rate. After all, it's awfully hard to trust a horse to prepare for the turn when he obviously isn't thinking about it. This exercise sets a horse up to practice bringing his attention back to the rider and his job, while throttling down his forward motion a bit and shifting his weight rearward. The addition of circles will reiterate what's coming next, making for a smooth, powerful transition to the second barrel. I don't want my horses to experience a runaway even one time, so I do my best to make sure that I have respect for the boundaries I offer as a foundation, so they don't even become familiar with the feeling. I don't allow them to ignore halter pressure. I don't allow them to step into my space. Yielding their minds and bodies with softness in all areas, in all applications and circumstances is a paramount pillar in my program.

How-to

Start with your barrel pattern set up as home as usual. After warming up, feel free to start this exercise at the walk or trot if your horse is anxious or pushy at slower speeds. Angle your horse in preparation to approach the first barrel as described in Exercise 17 – Position Perfection, so his weight is concentrated on his first barrel-side hind leg. Arc your way toward it, and depending on how extreme your horse's tendency to mentally disconnect is, you'll essentially stop, back and then circle as needed up to three or four times between your starting point and the first barrel.

How much you focus on the back up or the circle will depend on the specific issue you're facing. Is your horse not rating, not turning, not preparing for the turn with good position, not thinking, or all of the above? Use your judgement to customize this exercise based on your needs. For example, a

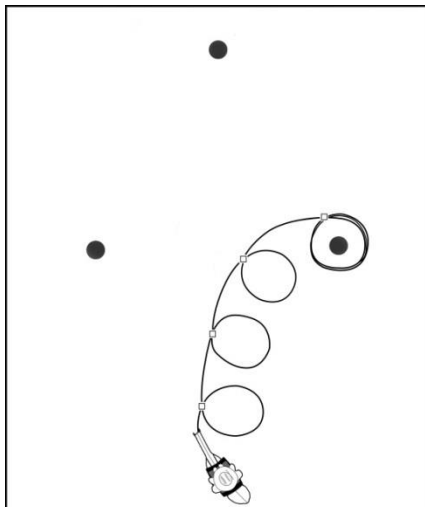
horse that isn't rating will benefit from more emphasis on the backing portion of the exercise. A horse that isn't turning will benefit from more repetitive circles. A horse that is getting out of position might benefit from emphasizing the positioning and weight balance, by counter arcing a few steps before circling (also see Exercise 25), and a horse that struggles mentally will especially benefit from obvious and extended rewards for a relaxed, connected and positive state of mind.



In any case, ask for the stop with your body by lowering your energy, sitting deep in your seat and saying a verbal "whoa," before then bringing in the reins. Back up twice as far as the distance it required to stop. Then let your horse breathe and relax for a moment. Reward him, and give him some peace and comfort for mentally and physically coming back to you.

No matter how firm you have to be or how much resistance you get initially, with this and all exercises, again *don't fall victim to your emotions*, which only causes a horse to want to run away from us mentally and physically even more. This isn't punishment by means of intimidation or fear. Horses do what they do *to survive or seek comfort*. The boundary lines are black and white and you can be very firm without an attitude that translates into "Do THIS or else!" Your energy is neutral. There are certain boundaries that must be respected, but there are no emotional strings attached and no shades of grey, which builds confidence.

After waiting long enough for your horse to relax, lick and chew, angle your horse's hips in the direction of the first barrel (don't allow your horse to lead with and fall in on the forehead) and start off loping a slightly larger than barrel-size circle right there (see diagram), in the same direction that you will turn the barrel. Loping in this direction (and not counter arcing completely off the other way) is suitable for a horse that isn't hooking the first barrel, because the repetition gets his mind thinking about and body going in the direction of the turn in advance. Repeat as space allows.



When your horse has performed a balanced, correct circle, again straighten out and head toward your first barrel and once again quickly come back down to a smooth stop. Initially, you'll just repeat as much stopping and circling to the first barrel as you have room for. As your horse begins to understand and learn, you can time your stopping and circling with the moment you feel your horse want to make an assumption and push into you, then instantly stop, rest and circle to bring your horse's mind and body back to you when it leaves. After circling the actual barrel two to five times, finish the pattern or repeat the exercise. It's better to have too much of a good thing than not enough, keep this in mind before testing with speed.

Exercise 20 – Run & Rate

Description

There's nothing more breathtaking than a horse who's rating and running at the same time. Maybe it was my first childhood experiences on my renegade pony that inspired my appreciation for this, or the many years of frustration stemming from going by the first barrel. Of course, for some horses rating comes very naturally. I don't seem to have had many of those horses! In this exercise, I'm excited to share tips for getting even more automatic and authentic "self-rate" without compromising forward motion. We've been building on "basic rate" in previous exercises and this could be considered the advanced version. Stopping or slowing down at the barrel is easy, and sometimes even necessary for extreme cases, but learning and teaching your horse to run and rate *at the same time* is more challenging, and even more fun!

Purpose

As I often emphasize, it's not so much what we do but *how*. A horse can drag their body backward without getting engaged or transferring weight properly to their hind end. Again, stopping or slowing down in our slow work on the pattern to teach rate will usually work *pretty well*, but I've also seen it cause horses to lose too much momentum; and are you after "pretty good" results, anyway? If we want a sure thing we have to think outside the box, and advance our horsemanship and ability to communicate, and instill *rate in motion*. In other words, to sum it up biomechanically, we must develop our ability to ask and clearly communicate with our horses when it's time to rate, causing them to reach deeply under themselves and prepare for the turn while still in motion and without losing power and speed. To teach this, we won't stop or change gait (we certainly don't change gait in a run, right?), we'll just change *how* the horse moves *within* that gait. Just because our horse manages to turn, or "kind of" rates, doesn't mean they are truly rating in motion. But when we make this distinction it changes everything! What makes the end result so amazing to watch and feel is that a horse will naturally round through their back, reach deeply under themselves and elevate their withers. It's beauty in motion. It feels incredible and clocks fast.

How-to

Teaching Run & Rate starts by refining even further our horse's understanding of what to do in their body based on what we do in ours. We want *our legs* to be connected to our horse's hind legs. Not only that, but the idea here is that when we elevate our "front end" by raising our chin, eyes and hands, as we sit deeper in the saddle, round our lower back, tuck our pockets and angle the bottom of our pelvis forward to ask for more hindquarter engagement in motion, that our horse should mirror this position in their body. To some degree horses do this naturally, but most of us spend a lot of time making careless movements in the saddle not realizing that we're actually desensitizing our horses to them. Refining our horse's education means teaching them to differentiate between what kind of activity is *meaningful* and what is *meaningless*. It requires us to have impeccable awareness and consistency. Ask yourself: "Does my horse respond to changes in my energy/life?" If you sit up a little straighter and raise the life in your body (as if you're in the starting position to run a race) does your horse feel that and get ready too? Remember an advanced education means that we don't just kick to go and pull to stop, which involves delays, but that our body and theirs

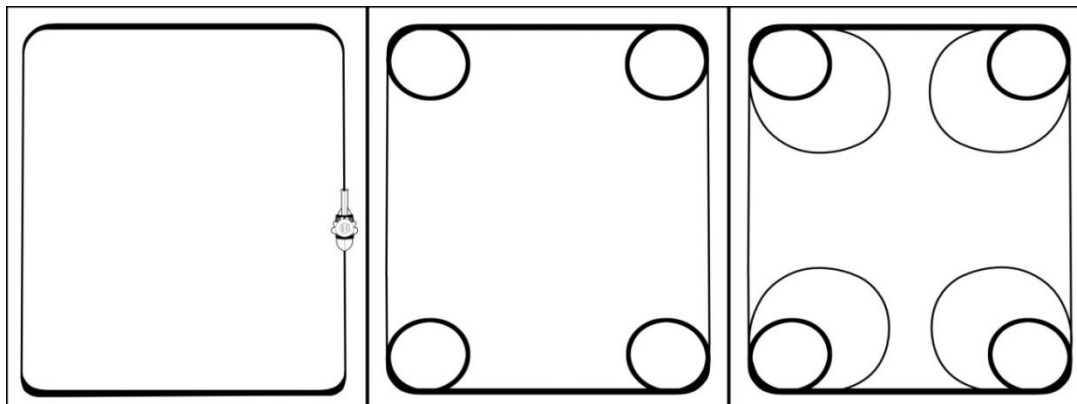
move in unison. Combined with their responsibility for “owning the pattern” it’s the ultimate marriage for high level performance at speed.

It’s not unusual to experiment by changing your own hindquarter position and then noticing your horse’s way of moving doesn’t change significantly. If that’s the case, I encourage you to get even more extreme as you “set it up and wait.” Over-exaggerate to motivate your horse enough that he tries to guess what you’re looking for, yet not for so long that you desensitize him. Keep asking for a few seconds with your body, gradually getting more dramatic as you wait for a subtle indicator that your horse is matching you, then relax to reward, and repeat.



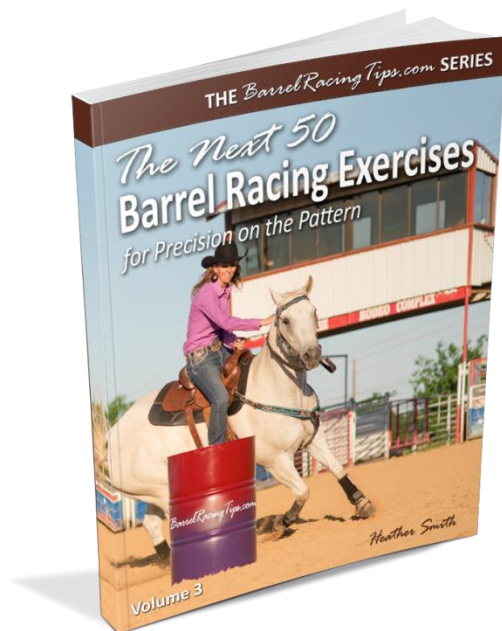
Starting at a standstill or walk, if you don’t get a response the next step is to very lightly tap your horse’s hind end with a rein or over & under in rhythm (you tap just as the hind leg leaves the ground – easier said than done!) to reinforce the idea that their hip is connected to your hip. When you adjust your “stride” by engaging your hind end, they are to also. Is your horse scared of your over & under? Remember, the meaning of our tools depends on the context, such as energy in our body. Your horse will make assumptions unless you’ve taught him these distinctions. As soon as you get connection, again stop and reward the slightest try. If you’re still struggling, consider brushing up by reviewing the fundamentals featured in Exercise 11 – A to B in *The First 51* to teach this. Eventually move up to a trot, then slow lope and gradually up to a gallop. This will dramatically improve your stops because your horse won’t have to make such an extreme change to “get ready” to stop or rate; they’ll be running in a way that has their body already as prepared as possible. While in the end your horse might not run every stride of the pattern like this (they will be more “front endy” at high speed on the straightaways between barrels), it will become much more natural to shift their weight just before each turn, making it quick, easy and efficient.

You can imagine as you cruise to the first barrel that instead of mentally checked out or running with too much weight on his front end, that with *your* pelvis buried and your hips “scooping” and cuing your horse’s to also lower and swing forward, that he’ll be mentally and physically engaged (rating) while also running. Now that you have the “how” to Run & Rate, apply it to the patterns below. When you have success there, then apply this newfound “hip connection” to *the* pattern.



Extended gallop (“Run”) on long side of arena and in large circles, collected lope or gallop (“Rate”) on short side and in small circles.

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