

THE *Barrel Racing Tips.com* SERIES

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



Arena-Side Workbook

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Volume 3

Heather Smith

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This is Your BONUS Companion to the 'The Next 50' - Featuring Diagrams and Summarized Descriptions for Quick & Easy Access!

You'll also enjoy more room for completing FUNsheets + the option to do so on your computer or device.

Good Answers Come From Good Questions – Your “How to Benefit” Checklist:

- Are the exercises performed in a way that educates my horse, while simultaneously improving his health & fitness?
- Am I pausing to visualize each exercise done with quality *first* in order to prepare my horse for success?
- Am I aware and willing to go back to basics, knowing it's the foundation all high-level maneuvers are built upon?
- Do I understand each individual horse's needs, and customize how I use repetition to help them learn?
- Am I a trainer that offers communication so consistent that my horses have complete confidence and trust in me?
- Do I watch video footage, not just of my runs but every-day riding, to constantly raise my awareness and improve?
- Have I empowered my horses with the education and health necessary to learn and perform with minimal stress?
- Am I realistic, flexible with timelines, and willing to adjust my goals to match my horse's readiness level?
- When faced with challenges, do I take responsibility for what I contribute to the partnership with my horse?
- Do I understand the difference between a problem and its symptoms, and focus on the parts to create a solution?
- Instead of molding and holding my horse's body into shape, do I use pressure & release to also educate his mind?
- When my horse doesn't understand, do I go back to what he does know, then adjust my approach and try again?
- Do I offer my horse a release when he does well, and have several ways to communicate when he's correct?
- Do I regularly put myself in uncomfortable learning situations and devote time to continued growth as a horseman?
- Am I committed to being “as gentle as possible but as firm as necessary” for effective and progressive training?

Additional Questions to Ask as You Execute and Troubleshoot:

- Does my horse maintain gait and direction?
- Is my horse's movement forward and energetic?
- Is my horse balanced laterally, or does he lean to the inside of a circle or turn?
- Is my horse balanced front to back, with adequate weight on the hindquarters?
- Is my horse calm, connected and responsive?
- Does my horse ever push into pressure, resist, or ignore my requests?
- Does my horse show signs of discomfort or irritability?
- Does my horse show signs of anxiety or tension?
- Does my horse need to build more coordination or strength?
- Am I looking where I want to go?
- Do I use my body (seat, legs, shoulders, weight, etc.) to direct my horse?
- Do I tend to overthink, or do I ride with feel and good timing?
- Am I leaning in the saddle, or am I completely balanced?
- Do I have an absolutely clear idea of what I want from my horse?
- Am I aware enough to notice the most subtle signs of a problem?
- Can I *really* sort out the cause of a problem versus the symptom?

Let's Get Physical

Exercise 1 – Triple “H” Program

It is said, that if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. We're more likely to reach our destination when we have a map to follow - use this chart to plan your "Horse & Human Health Program."

Your <i>Horse</i> & Human Health Program FUNsheet	What's Working? What's Not? What are you satisfied with in each area? What's going well? What are you good at? This leads to - what's NOT working? What could be better? What's missing? What's in the way?	WHAT and WHY Do You Want to Improve? WHY are adjustments important to you? What will be the result? How will you and your horse benefit? Ex: More energy and time for family, better riding, less stress/overwhelm.	What Actions Will You Take, and WHEN? List action steps you're committing to in each area, plus a time-frame or deadline for doing so. What must happen first - for changes to occur and be followed through on?
Your Nutrition			
Horse's Nutrition			
Your Exercise			
Horse's Exercise			
Your Rest and Recovery			
Horse Rest and Recovery			

Notes:

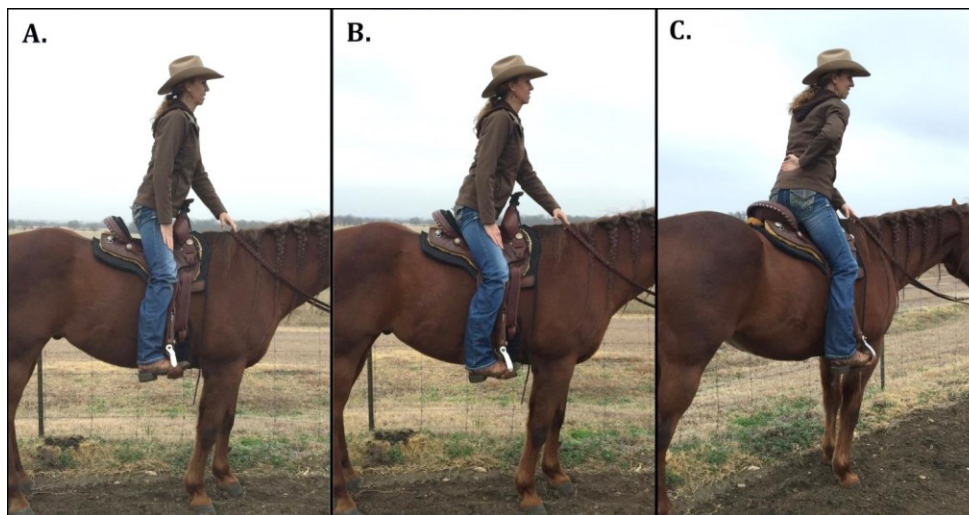
Exercise 2 – Hop to It

Just like our horses, we can always improve whatever level of natural talent for speed and agility we have with learned and conditioned skill! Tape a rope to your workout room floor. Jump down the rope from one end to the other as quickly as possible until you reach the end. Then go back once the other direction for each exercise pictured below. Depending on how much speed and agility focus is included in your regular workout routine, perform these exercises 1 - 5 days per week.



Forward & back. Hop side to side. Repeat on one foot. Side to side one foot. High knee run. Butt kick run.

Exercise 3 – Please Stand Up



Standing Position

Half Way (Two-Point) Position

Place one hand behind your back for an added challenge!

STANDING in the stirrups actually builds stability in our *seat!* Stand for a certain number of strides, then sit that many strides and repeat, OR work up to five straight minutes of standing in the stirrups at a trot.

Exercise 4 – Jet Fuel

Once you have your forage (hay or pasture) analyzed for nutrient content, you can use the values on your feed bag and the instructions and calculations below to start balancing your horse's diet.

A weighted average is a mathematical way to calculate an average value based on proportion and importance factors. This differs from a regular average, because the importance factor gives more value or weight to the resulting average based on its importance. For example, let's say we know a horse needs 25 lbs. of feed per day. Of that 25 lbs. we want to feed one part pasture (9% protein), one part grass/alfalfa mix hay (20% protein), and one part Renew Gold™ feed (15% protein). Each type of feed contains different amounts of protein, and we want to know how many pounds of each we need to feed in order to result in 10% overall protein (8-12% is recommended for speed event horses). In this example the forage weight is our proportion and the protein value is our importance factor. To calculate the weighted average to obtain an overall 10% protein level we must first assume a weight for each type of forage. We know that the total weight should be close to 25 lbs. If we look at the current protein levels in the forage (20% in the hay, 9% in the pasture) we know it will take lots of pasture to make the average 10%.

Let's assume we want to use 20 lbs. of pasture, 4 lbs. of hay and add a half a pound of feed.

The mathematics would be: $(20 \text{ lbs.} \times 9\%) + (4 \text{ lbs.} \times 20\%) + (.5 \text{ lb.} \times 15\%)$

This results in a value of 267.5; however, we are not done yet...

We then divide this number by the total weight: $267.5/24.5 \text{ lbs.}$

This results in 10.5% protein, and is an example of our own horses' off season diet when they have plentiful access to pasture. I want a higher protein level when conditioning and competing, which would be easily achieved when they are on pasture less and eating more alfalfa hay. Further adjustments may need to be made, however, after looking at and making comparisons between other levels recommended by the NRC, what our specific horse's needs are, and what our feed analysis reports, feed bag and supplement labels tell us. I also make it a priority to calculate these figures for fat levels, which I prefer to be at 6-8% for sprinting athletes. When calculating these figures, repeat the process until you get the answer closest to your goal.

Microsoft Excel is a great tool for calculating weighted averages, or to make it much easier there are also online weighted average calculators available. The weight column would be the weight of each type of forage, and the "data number" would be the % protein (or whatever you are calculating), and your result is the overall protein level based on the weights and percentages entered.

Exercise 5 – Pre and Post-Ride Routine

Refer to the book to see M routine, then use the form below to outline *yours*.

My Pre-Ride Routine: _____

My Post-Ride Routine: _____

My Pre-Run Routine: _____

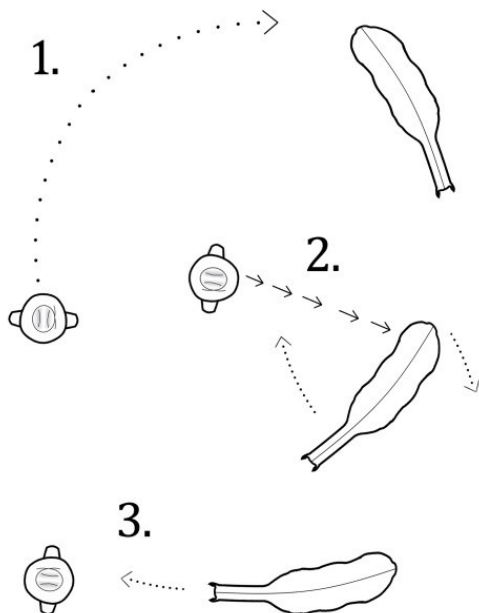
My Post-Run Routine: _____

Additional Weekly or Monthly Therapies: _____

From the Ground Up

Exercise 6 – Dream Catcher

Take steps to reveal your DREAM HORSE, beginning with being intentional in how you START every ride and run. Start off *on the right foot* by catching your horse's attention *before* you halter him. The biggest obstacle in "catching our dream horse" is often being in a rush. Your, your horse and your barrel racing are all worth investing quality time into. Make it a priority and commit daily to giving yourself a few minutes to set yourselves up for success. Apply pressure as you arc toward your horse's hindquarters if necessary to tip his eyes and attention toward you, then relax & reward.



Exercise 7 – Snappy Backing

Yielding to steady or driving pressure on the ground is our foundation for safety. Advancing our horse's understanding in this area is the first step toward teaching (or re-teaching) a horse to yield to bit pressure and respond to body language under saddle. It's our insurance for never "running out of bit" and helps ensure we have the respect established that is *not only* critical for our horses, our own, and other's safety, but is part of the educational foundation necessary for high performance.



Backing to steady pressure from the side / Backing to driving pressure from the front / Backing to driving pressure from the side

Exercise 8 – Circle Responsibly

CAN YOU – SEND your horse out to lunge on a circle without continuously coaxing him, by making it uncomfortable or difficult for him to go faster OR slow down? THEN reward him with a rest when he continues to go (even for a short distance at first) without micromanagement? It's empowering for horses to *know* and *do* their job! As Ray Hunt would say, it's all about making "the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult." Be quick, precise, persistent and clear with the timing of pressure, and apply it with a smile on your face! ☺



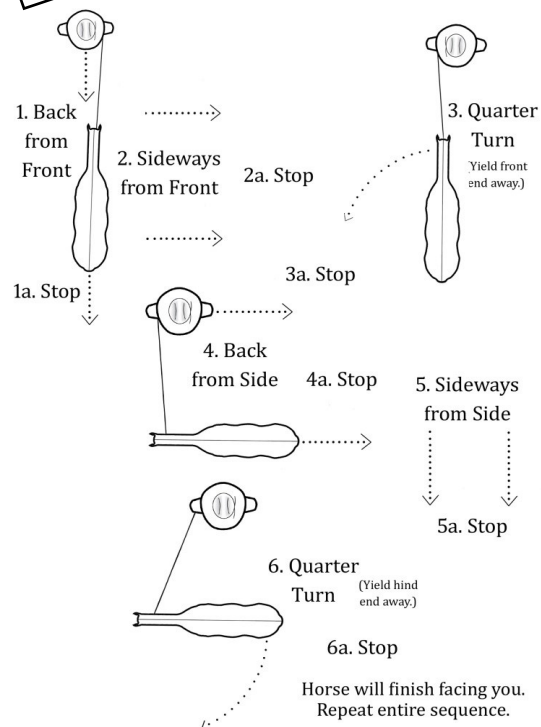
Exercise 9 – Better Biomechanics

CAN YOU – put your horse on a circle, lunging around you (responsibly), *then* wait for him to lower his head or sneeze? The instant he does, immediately ask for a stop, give him some verbal praise, and a rest reward. Wait for him to look at you or lick & chew before starting again. See where it leads!

I believe changing Dot Com's movement patterns was the #1 factor in helping him overcome career-threatening navicular issues. – Heather Smith

Exercise 10 – Line Dance

Follow the diagram at right on the ground or make up a series of movements as you go. Stay committed to starting and stopping crisply before putting it all together. Don't overthink or get stuck on these specific steps, but don't let your HORSE make up his own moves or drift! Remember - in barrel racing our horses must rate INSTANTLY, there cannot be a delay, so we must have high standards in our everyday training. When your horse responds well, turn away to give him relief, allow him to "soak," ask questions and connect with you vs. being too demanding for too long. We want instant responsiveness, yet without constantly barking (one-way) orders – it's a two-way conversation!



Stretch It Out

Stretching for Lengthened Stride and More Speed

Success & Safety Tips:

- Gently challenge your horse to go just outside his comfortable range of motion, without forcing
- Keep the horse's legs aligned with the body, support the joints and don't pull or hold the soft tissues
- Hold stretches for 20-30 seconds or do 3 sets of 5 – 10 seconds
- Always use caution when under, directly in front of, or behind a horse



Front Fetlock Stretches
Forward and back, 3 sets of 5 seconds each. Also perform stretches on the hind fetlocks



Foreleg Stretch
Using your inside (horse side) thigh, bring the bottom of the horse's foot to level, and hold for 20 seconds



Shoulder Lift
(Lift the knee to stretch the shoulder) Support just above the knee, allow the lower leg to hang



Front Leg Extension
Support the foot/fetlock, gently ask to stretch forward and step down (be careful!)



Rearward Hind Extension Allow the cannon bone to rest on your leg as you squat low and encourage the leg back. Hold up to 20 seconds, and release on relaxation.



Forward Hind Extension Pick up foot, then back up to straddle your horse's front leg. Hold stretch then gently set foot down gently so the horse will stay there for a moment.

To increase speed, we must either increase the rate at which the feet move, or increase the distance covered with each step. When stretches are performed regularly after a brief warm-up before every ride, our horses become more and more supple and flexible, and are better prepared to practice traveling with quality, forward movement, which transfers to more POWER on the pattern. We have the power to greatly *influence* our horse's **quality of movement** by causing them to lengthen their stride and *travel further with every step* – essentially allowing them to clock even faster!

Start Strong, Finish FAST

Exercise 11 – Walk to Win

Whether you practice your timing and position for a run *on foot* around the pattern, or imagine your perfect run while walking *on* your horse, OR practice in the saddle *without* a horse – most important is that you DO IT. Commit for 30 days and watch your jockeying transform!

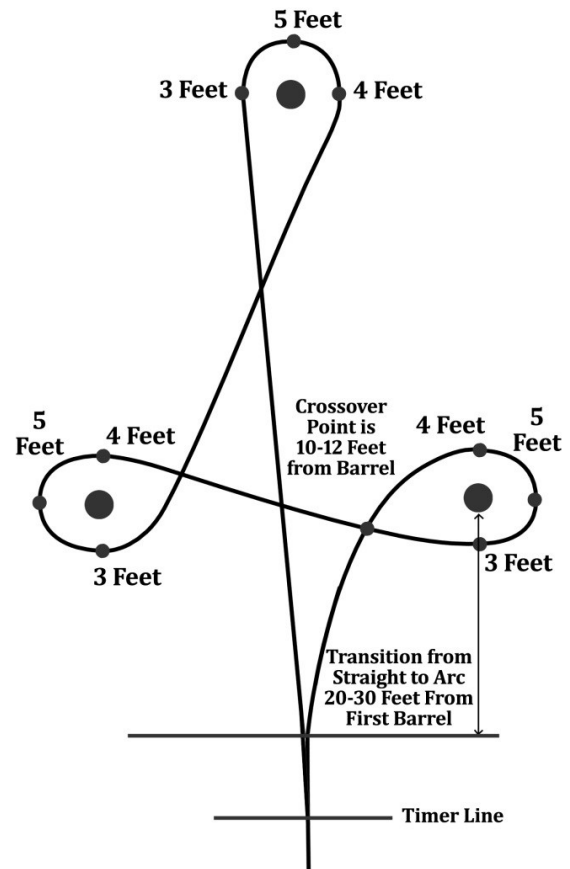


Exercise 12 – Measured Improvement

Measure out, mark and practice YOUR horse's "perfect pattern" to confirm muscle memory. When you and your horse know exactly *where to go* and precisely *when to rate*, it builds both confidence and good timing in horse and human alike!

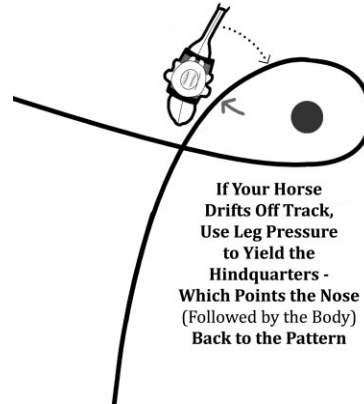
As you go, always keep these "Three R's" in mind:

- **Responsibility** - If you plant your rein hand on the withers and guide your horse only with focus and subtle body language, does he stay on his track or veer off?
- **Responsiveness** - Can you correct and reposition your horse in an instant (less than a second) in your slow work when necessary, primarily with your legs?
- **Riding** - Do you approach the turns and pull your horse's head around or guide with smoothness and fluidly, using your seat to encourage reach while riding the horse's *whole body* with timing and precision?



Exercise 13 – Get Hooked

Partners *do their part!* Teach your horse to “OWN” HIS JOB on the pattern. When he takes responsibility, you can add energy, subtly support good form, and make any minor adjustments.



Exercise 14 – Supple Speed

If we want to “drive our horses into the bit,” then bit contact can’t *always* mean stop. We must teach our horses that the meaning of contact is dependent on our energy and body language. We want them to soften to our hands, yet keep the energy in their body forward and strong for engagement and collection. By keeping our hand position “locked” they can learn to stay within these boundaries (without the risks that come from “bitting up.”) It’s all about softening through the body and responding to our seat/energy.



Exercise 15 – Brake it Down



There are three different cues we can use to slow down, rate or stop – either individually or in combination. They are: seat/weight/energy, voice and reins. *Commit them to mental AND muscle memory by teaching the stop in this order:*

1. Let the life out of your body
2. Deepen your seat
3. Say a verbal cue
4. Smoothly bring in the reins if necessary

“A refined education means deeper understanding and less likelihood of confusion, but requires an advanced horseman to instill and maintain.”

First Barrel Finesse

Exercise 16 – First Things First

Before trouble-shooting first barrel issues with training, rule out potential problems in these areas.

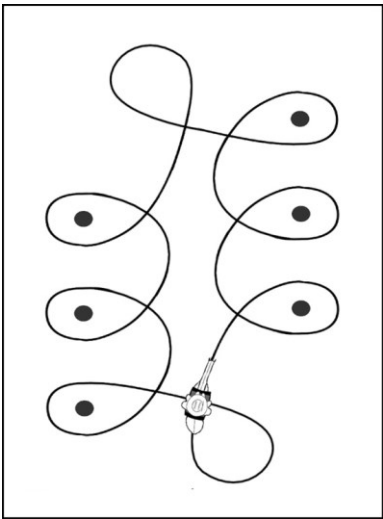
First Barrel Checklist	Ulcers	Feet and Joints	Saddle Fit	Teeth	Riding	Headgear
Put it to the Test – Some Ideas for Analyzing and Creating Your Perfect Position	Experiment by giving your horse 60 cc of Maalox 3x/day for several days. If you see a change, start an ulcer protocol.	Is your horse a little 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.)
Your Resolution – Make Notes for Carrying Out Your Action Plans!						

Exercise 17 – Position Perfection

	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>		

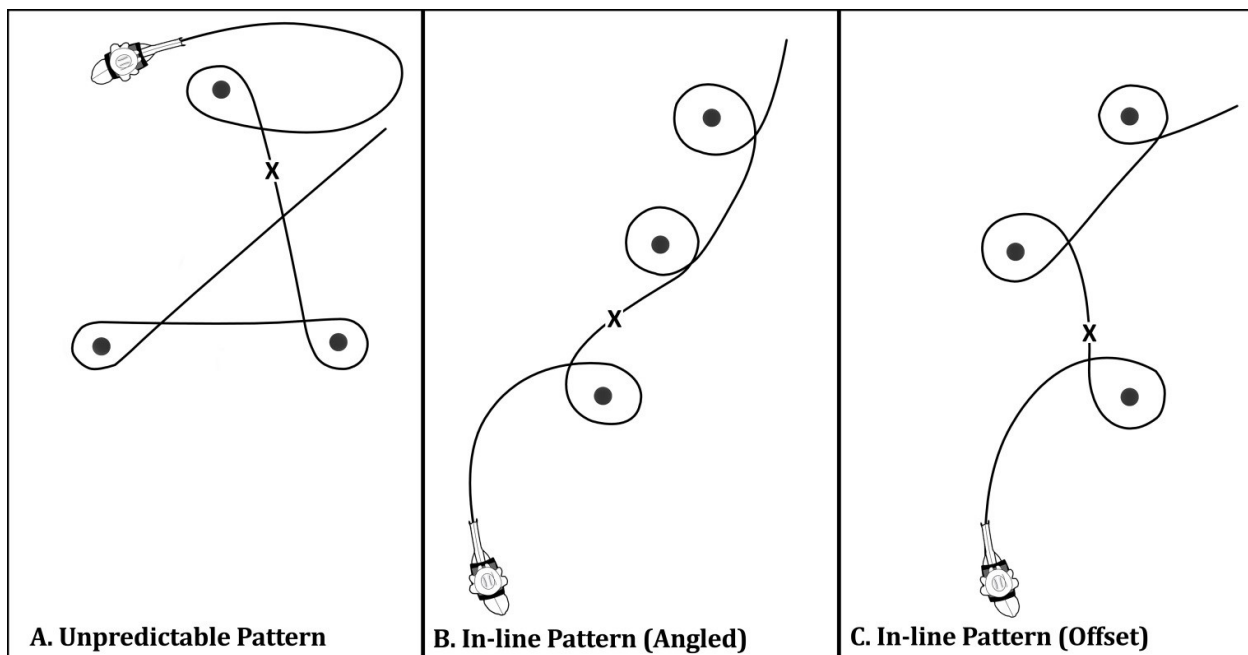
For a starting position that prepares us for a good first barrel, make sure *what seems like* a position problem isn't caused by or related to any of the issues above in Exercise 16. When your horse is mentally, emotionally and physically prepared, address positioning issues at the gate or in the approach and turn around the first barrel by following the diagram at right to practice your timing and form without starting/stopping or making actual runs. Your goal isn't just to make random loops, but to as closely as possible simulate the exact positioning you want in the approach.

"There are always ways to overcome challenging setups if you have control and connection to your horse's body and mind." – Heather Smith



Exercise 18 – Mix it Up

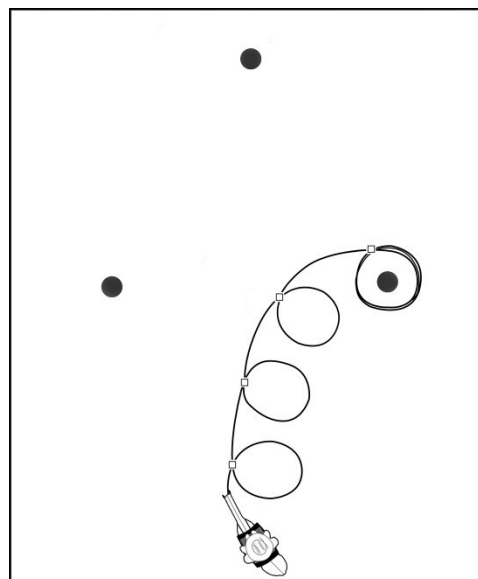
If your horse makes assumptions or anticipates and ignores your requests at any point from the gate to the first barrel, keep him on his toes by performing these extreme variations of the pattern.



Exercise 19 – Stop and Circle

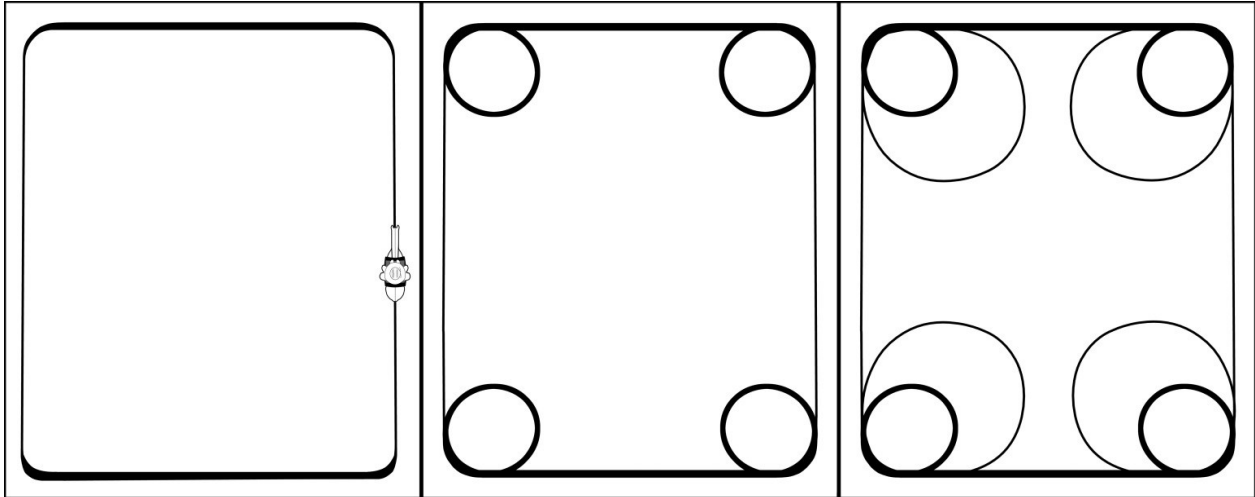
Does your horse tend to stiffen and brace up in the approach to the first barrel? Does he sometimes go by it, or even go all the way to the fence – and beyond? If so, it's usually the horse's MIND that leaves us (and the pattern) *before* their body (or maybe was never with us OR on his job to begin with). Stop and circle repetitively on the way to the first barrel to get your horse in a *rating & turning* frame of mind. Be sure to reward him for thinking, connecting and positively responding to your requests. Staying *with you* (around the first barrel) must become the most appealing place to be.

"...we have to devote ourselves to building their confidence and make sure that when we ask them to "get gone" or run full speed physically, that they stay with us and don't leave mentally." – Heather Smith



Exercise 20 – Run & Rate

The more comfortable and skilled we become at “running & rating,” the better we (and our horses) can do it in competition! The diagrams below offer great options for practicing these qualities.



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

3 x 3 Troubleshooting Plan - For Creating Solutions - Step x Step

For the HORSE

1. **What** is the solution you’re looking for? List the SOURCE of *the problem* vs. the symptom(s).

2. **Where?** Where on the pattern is the issue occurring, *and* where on the pattern will the solution take place, or *begin* to take place? Be specific; how many *feet* from the barrel, etc.? (Mark it out). _____
3. **When?** What will your horse need to do, or *how* will he need to travel/use himself differently in _____ each situation below? Make an action plan!
 - a. In a run _____
 - b. In slow work _____
 - c. In general riding _____

For the RIDER

1. **What** must happen? As a rider, what could you be doing that is contributing to the problem? What are you willing to do (or not do) to correct this?

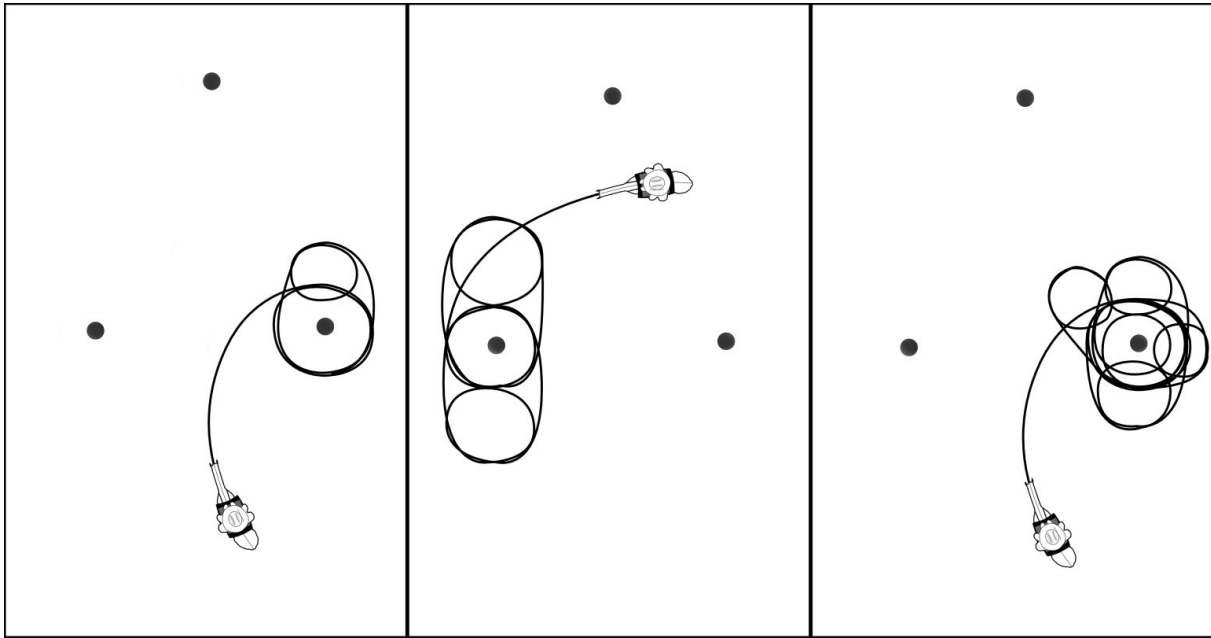
2. **Where?** Where exactly on the pattern are adjustments to your riding required?

3. **When?** What will you be more conscious of and/or how to you plan to ride differently in each of the situations listed below? How can you enjoy the process?
 - a. In a run _____
 - b. In slow work _____
 - c. In general riding _____

Second Barrel Success

Exercise 21 – Smooth it Out

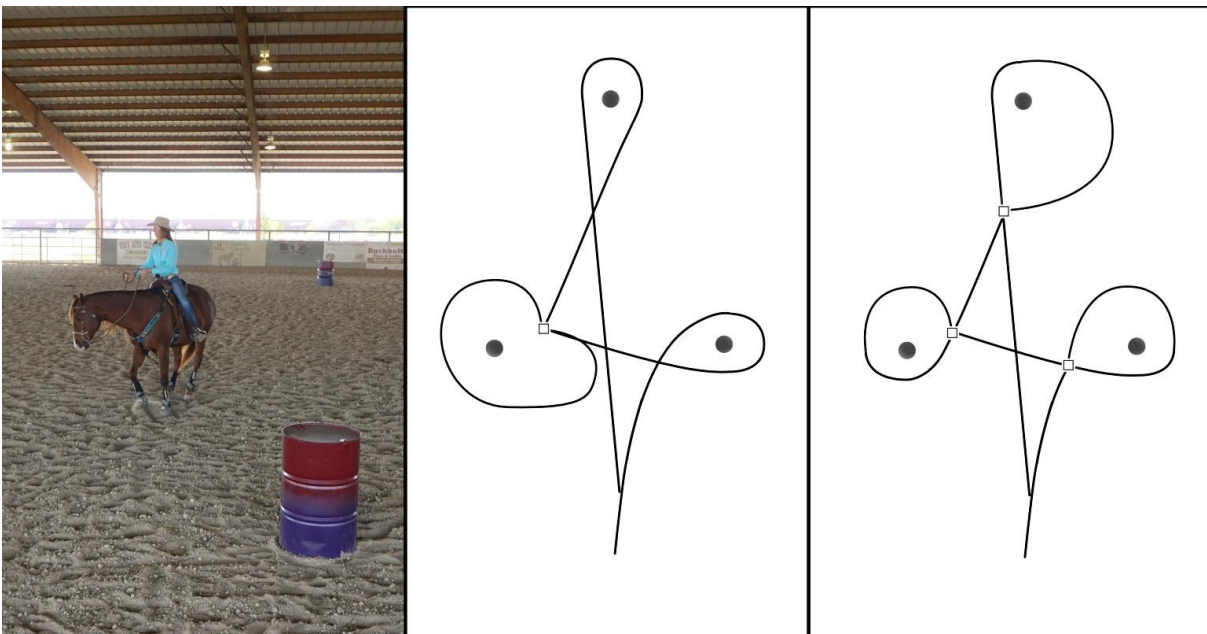
The objective is to make varieties of circles NEXT TO the barrel, then go back and forth as needed (back around *the actual barrel*) to replace poor movement or behavior patterns with better habits.



Start at any barrel or any place in the arena. Vary the location and size of the circles based on your horse's needs in each moment.

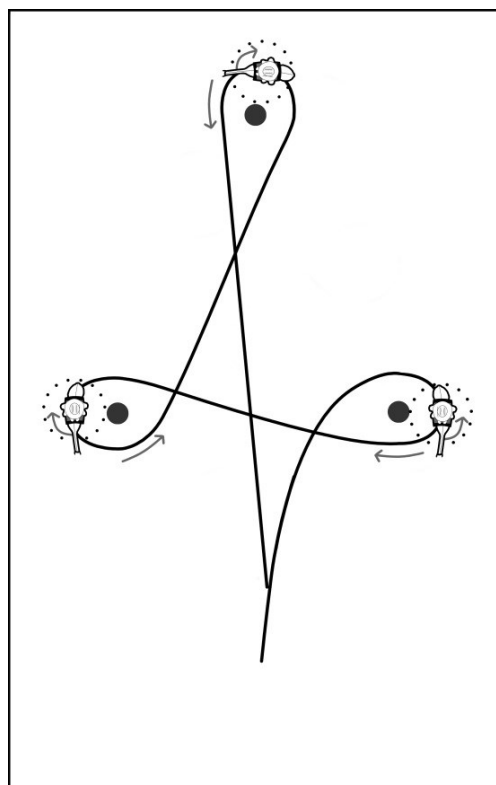
Exercise 22 – Lollipop

Does your horse *seem* to want to crash barrels? Change the subject (and direction)!

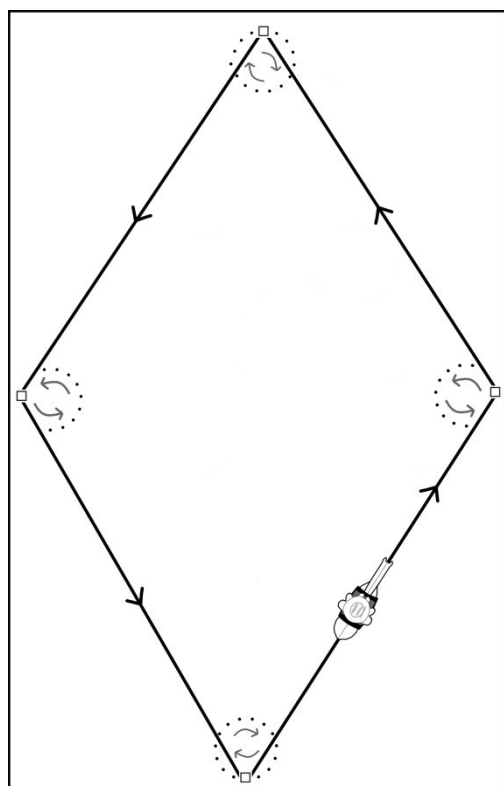


Exercise 23 – Reverse 360

Performing 360 degree turn-arounds or spins in the turns, AWAY from the barrel helps lift and elevate a horse who leans and dives, getting them in the habit of placing more weight on their outside hind foot vs. disengaging. 360's can also be performed *toward* the barrel - this will still help the horse use their hind end and can help a horse who tends to drift out of the turns. Anytime your horse is making an assumption and/or dropping in, interrupt the habit by rocking back and asking for another 360. It's as if you're repeatedly asking, "Come back to me and get correct." When they perform a revolution of reverse 360's with quality at the second barrel, move on to the third as normal or include 360's there, and also at the first barrel as needed. Keep in mind, as you're spinning that the hind legs should stay fairly stationary. In reining, a pivot foot that lifts up and down is acceptable but not "coke bottling" or swapping ends.



Exercise 24 – Forty-Five Fencing



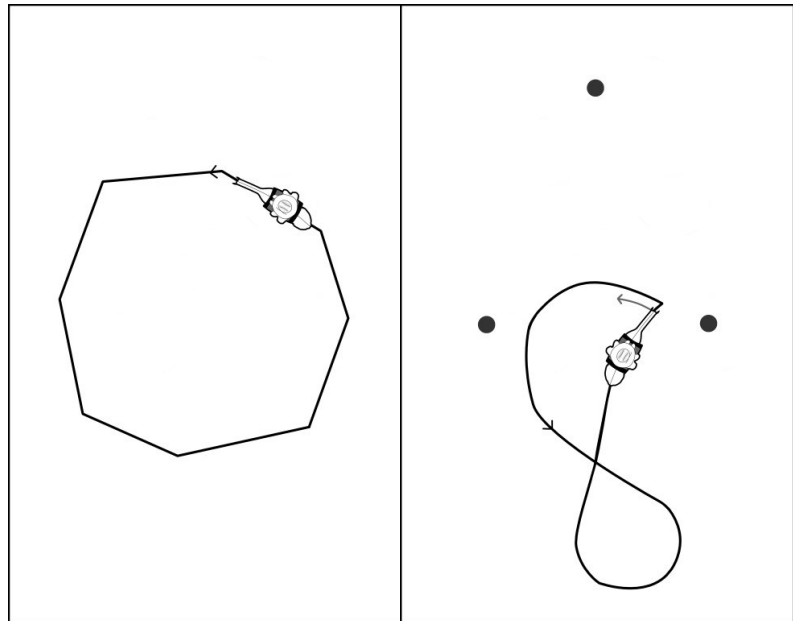
"Maximizing God-given talent is the name of the game. We can help our horses fill in for a lot of what they lack in athleticism with learned skill – if we're deliberate."

Sprint your horse from each of the four center points of the arena fences/walls to the next, to make a diamond shape. Do just one sprint at a time; not in rapid succession, but in a way that allows your horse a chance to rest at each fence. Then roll back to the outside a 3/4 turn on the short sides of the arena, and a 1/4 turn to the inside on the long sides, and straighten out to blast off again. The goal is for your horse to impeccably respond, specifically when it comes to the precise split second you ask him to stop, rather than let the fence dictate this moment. You'll likely feel your horse prepare just a hair early, and if that's the case, encourage your horse forward. The degree to which your horse is syncing with the fence vs. you will be very subtle. Before they end up at the wall anyway, you must be keenly aware and quick to encourage your horse that extra step forward.

Exercise 25 – Stop the Drop

Any time you feel a horse lean, “pick them up” and head off the other direction. Make it easier to move balanced and more work to keep dropping in. Repeat until the horse maintains balance in the turns and doesn’t anticipate.

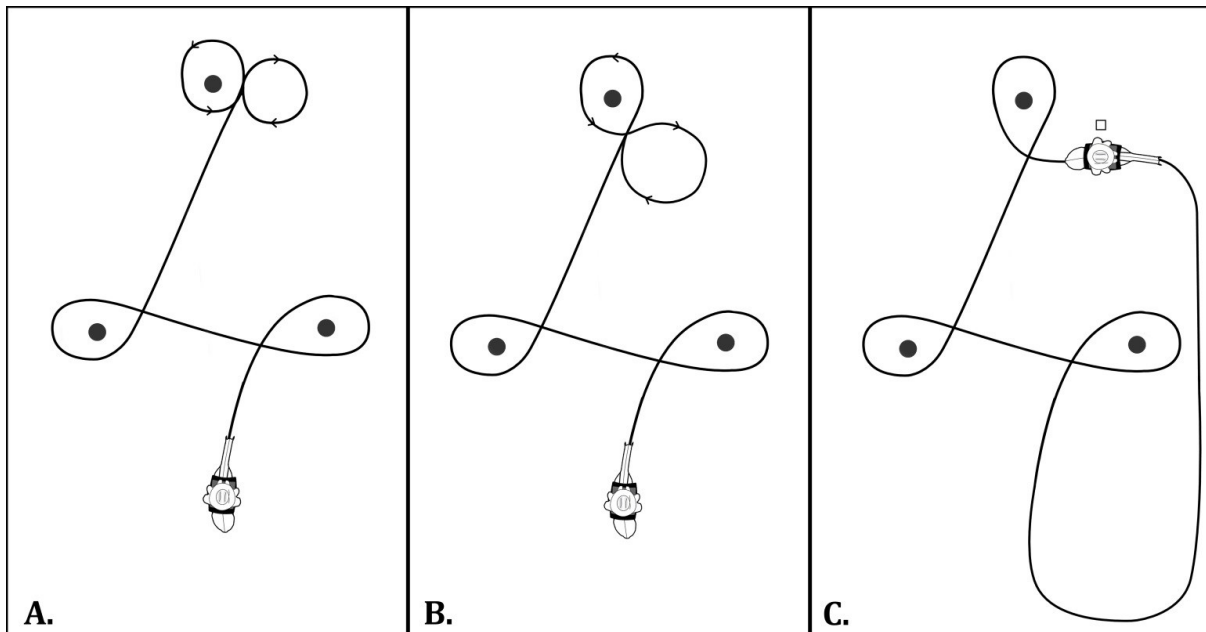
To me, a “dropped shoulder” doesn’t feel like dropping at all, but more like leaning or heaviness on the front end or to the inside.” - Heather Smith



Thriving at Third

Exercise 26 – Figure 8 to Finish

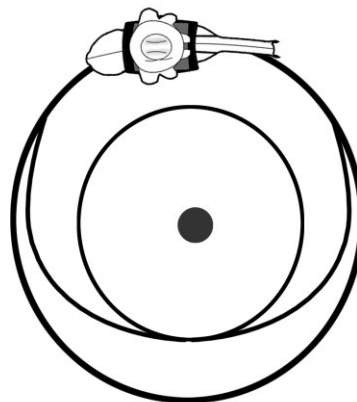
Depending on how your horse exits the third barrel, the options below can correct a habit of leaving wide. Use version A. if your horse tends to blow off the back side, heading for the side arena fence. Version B. is best for a horse that tends to bow out at the exit of the turn and all the way home. Consider adding a rest point (C.) in the direction opposite of where your horse tends to go.



Exercise 27 – Specific Circles

For perfect turns, practice perfect circles!

- 1. Connection** – Is your horse focused, willing, and responsive; in other words – mentally connected?
- 2. Freedom** – Does your horse easily reach, stretch and extend his stride with flexibility and fluidity?
- 3. Impulsion** – Is your horse emotionally balanced with an equal amount of “go” and “whoa?”
- 4. Precision** – Can your horse circle perfectly, and accept correction instantly without resistance?
- 5. Flexion** – Can your horse maintain a circle, with subtle lateral nose-to-tail flexion through his body?
- 6. Collection & Balance** – Can your horse circle balanced, with his hind end engaged?
- 7. Independence** – Even if you put slack in the reins, can your horse continue loping a perfect circle?



“...the quality of our horse’s circles at slow speeds is directly connected to the quality of their turns in a run at high speed.” – Heather Smith

Exercise 28 – Double Barrel

Varying how many times you circle a barrel at each gait in slow work, as well as at speed, is a powerful way to correct problems or improve what’s already good. Here are some tips:

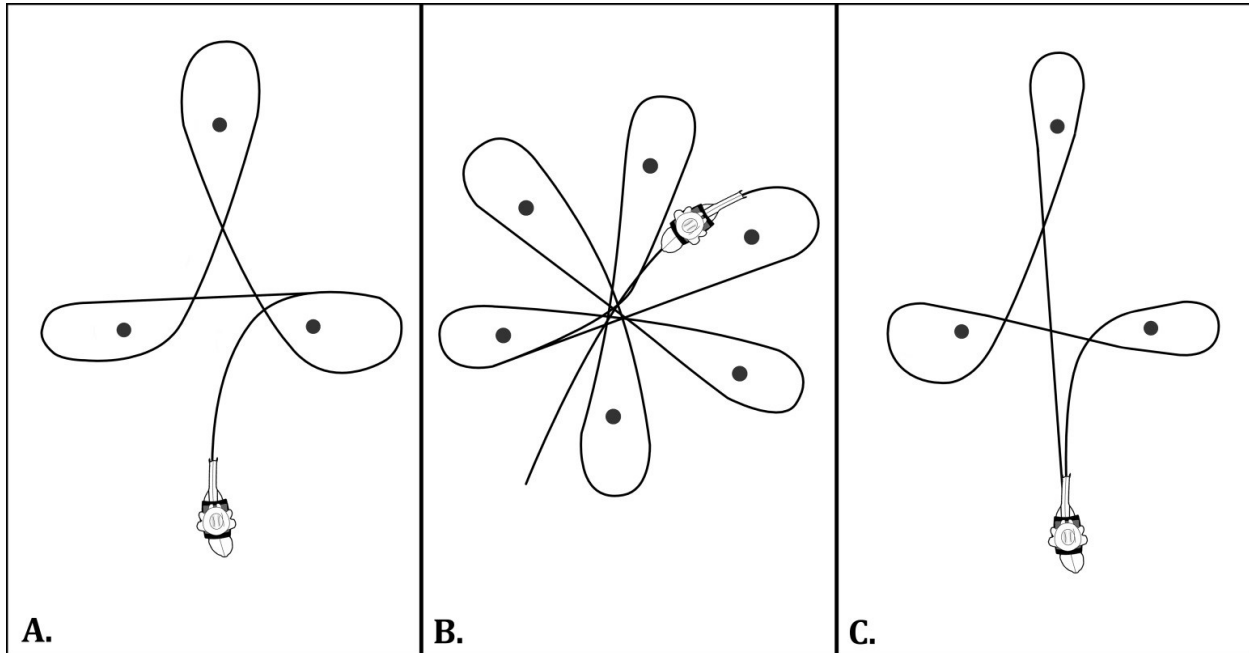
- Smoothly slowing down and/or stopping and backing up can be good for horses who are anxious and tense. The more rate you need in a run, the more stopping (with a relaxing rest) you’ll do at the rate point.
- Circling two times or more emphasizes to “stay in the turn and finish the turn.”
- Slowing down in gait then transitioning upward teaches the horse to rock their weight back for quicker, easier preparation for the turn and more power coming through and hustling away from it.



“It’s my opinion that we don’t need to stop before the barrels to teach rate, but we must become masters at teaching a horse to change the way they use their bodies in motion... So yet again, it’s not so much what we do but how. As a horse prepares for the turn in the approach to the barrel, there is a gathering, shortening or compressing taking place. The better a horse is at doing this, the less likely they’ll be strung out in the turn or get strung out as they exit the turns (which is common at the third barrel). This exercise utilizes transitions to teach and practice rate in motion.”

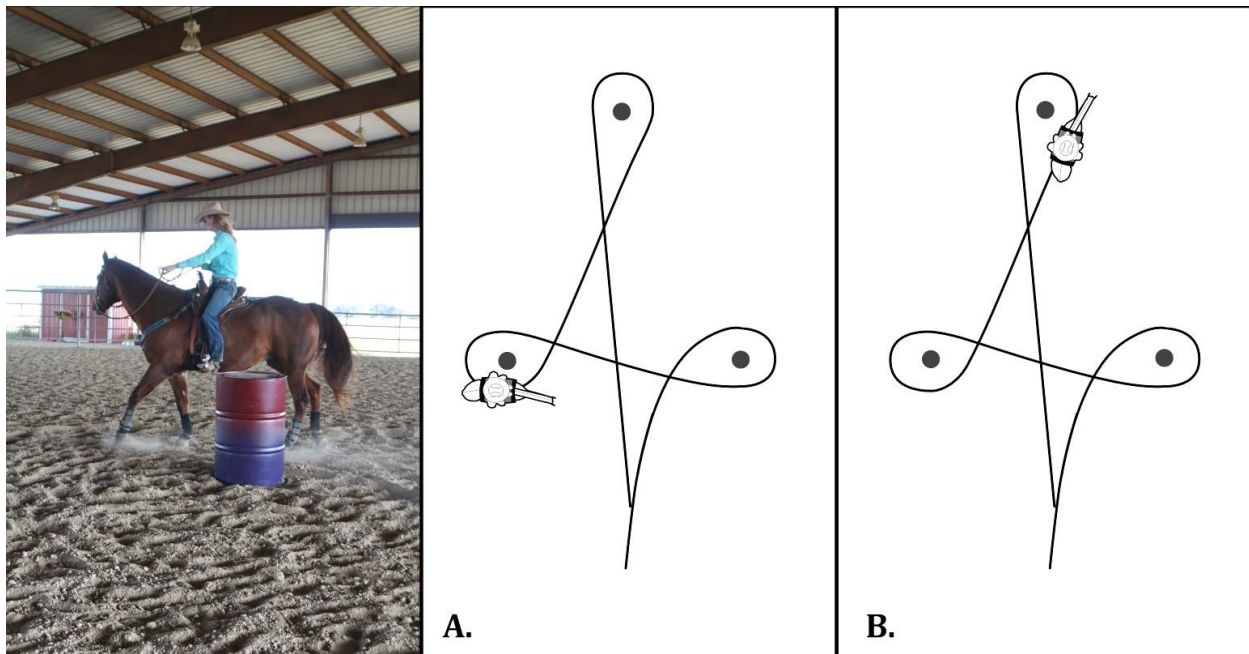
Exercise 29 – Straight In & Out

The fastest path between two points is a straight line, and with straightness comes power and therefore greater SPEED. Here are opportunities to get your straight *even straighter!*



Exercise 30 – Reverse Counter Arc

For a horse who tends to elevate up, out and away from the turns in a run, again in this case we can “do the opposite” by arcing our horse’s body toward the barrel to re-educate their mind and body.



Engaged for Power

Exercise 31 – Triple R

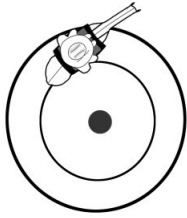
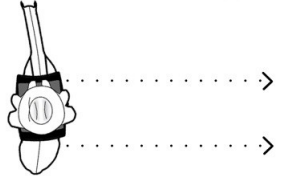
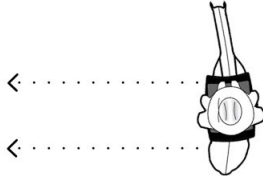
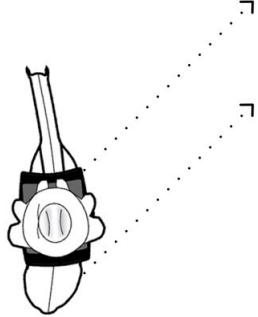
Start with **Relaxation**: Asking a horse to bend through their ribs, yield laterally, or disengage the hindquarters repeatedly with gentle yet firm leadership is extremely effective for settling emotions.

Responsibility Checklist:

1. **Responsibility for DIRECTION** – My horse follows where my eyes focus without micromanagement, and is respectful and responsive to adjustments without resistance.
2. **Responsibility for GAIT** – My horse maintains forward motion without micromanagement with impulsion, balance and rhythm on a straight line and in large-medium circles.
3. **Responsibility for SHAPE** – My horse understands and can maintain the three types of flexion below on their own (at least for a few strides):
 - Longitudinal – Over the topline, nose to tail
 - Latitudinal – Lateral bend through entire body
 - Vertical – From the base of neck to poll

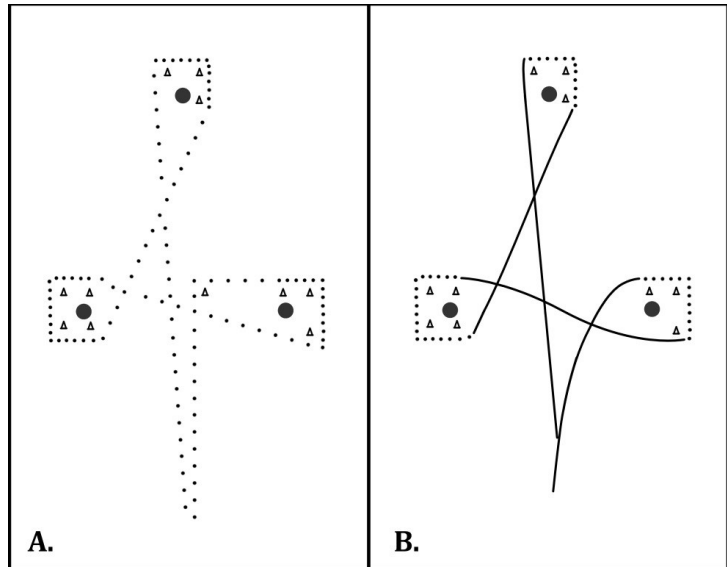
Exercise 32 – Two Track Turn

Consider how a speed boat motors powerfully across a lake with its engine engaged down in the water as its front end elevates. The goal here also, is to create more weight transfer to the hindquarters and elevation in the front end in order to dissolve the tendency many barrel horses have, which is to dive excessively low on the forehand, causing their hind quarters to disengage. As this occurs, their center of gravity moves forward, losing power. In the following exercise we'll be using specific lateral positioning and bend to encourage the horse to do all of the above around a barrel with softness and suppleness. This angle helps to discourage a horse from anticipating the turn around an actual barrel. It's helpful to remember that the barrel should stay "behind your leg."

	 <p>Sideways Move straight to the side with bend in the opposite direction of travel.</p>  <p>Sidepass Move straight to the side with bend in the same direction of travel.</p>	 <p>Leg Yeild Move equally forward and to the side with a very slight bend in the opposite direction of travel.</p>
<p>A Two Track Turn Can be done around a single barrel, on any pattern, or on <i>the pattern</i>, at certain barrels, or all barrels.</p>		

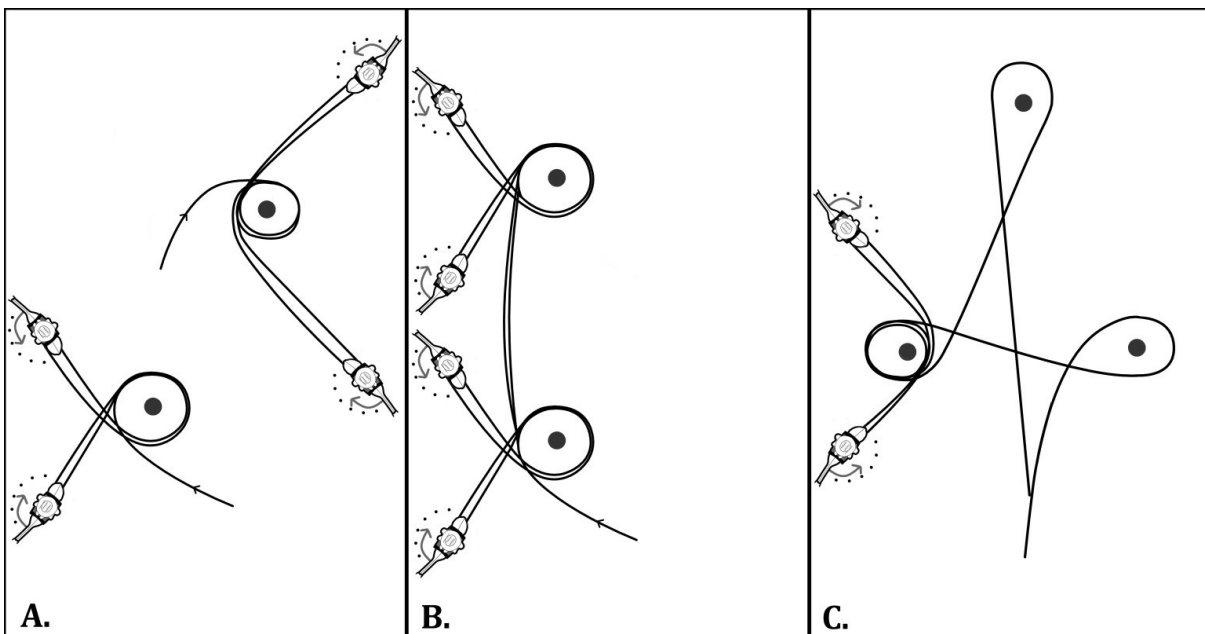
Exercise 33 – Be Square

First developed and shared by multiple time NFR qualifier and World Champion, **Connie Combs**, the Squares Exercise is a staple in the program of many top barrel racers. Diagram A. indicates complete straightness in each step of the pattern, which is ideal for a horse that is leaning and unbalanced even between the barrels. Diagram B. allows for a subtle arc between barrels and is best for a horse that is struggling in the turns. For this horse, stop further forward with the horse's hip at the barrel. Stop and rest at each point.

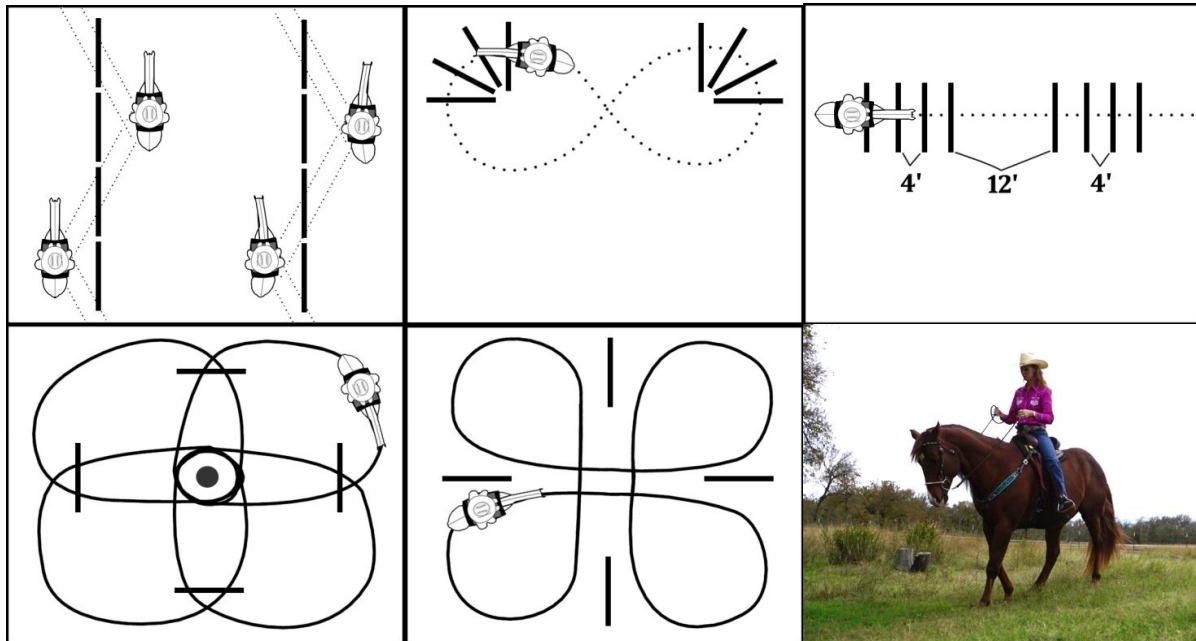


Exercise 34 – Break Off & Roll Back

Take the dynamic qualities of rollbacks directly to the turns for more engagement & power! If your horse uses his body well in rollbacks but lollygags around the barrels, use this exercise to bring qualities from one area to the other. Place a barrel approximately 30 feet from the wall, then lope a circle, roll back on the wall in the opposite direction, then lope around the barrel like you would a turn – really using your posture and body to sit deep yet hustle your horse and utilize his hindquarters just as he did in the rollback. If the turn doesn't feel good yet, again perform another rollback or two then again lope around that barrel. You should start to feel your horse moving with more quality around the barrel, and with more weight shifted to his hind end.



Exercise 35 – Hills and Poles

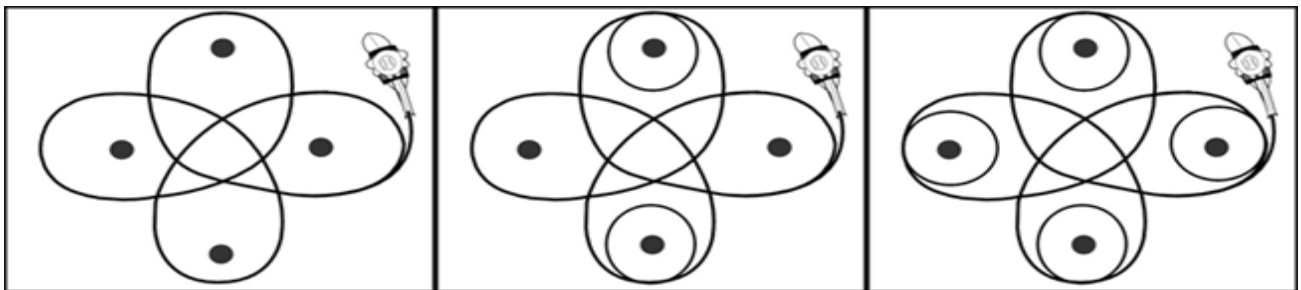


A horse that is asked to move over varying terrain (such as hills and ground poles) needs to *think about* where to place his feet. This is well suited practice for barrel horses, who tend to spend excess time running and often limited time *thinking*. Another benefit is that it builds sure-footedness and confidence by improving proprioception and coordination, also making these excellent exercises for rehabilitation following injury. The more a horse concentrates on placing their feet and gets comfortable on varying terrain, the more relaxed and secure they will become in general. In addition, hill work and pole work strengthens both postural and gymnastic muscles, which are important for fast barrel runs, not to mention soundness and longevity.

Refined Maneuverability

Exercise 36 – Quatrefoil

Use these patterns to practice ALL the qualities necessary for a great run, such as rate, shape and footfall in the approach as well as engagement and acceleration through and away from the turns.

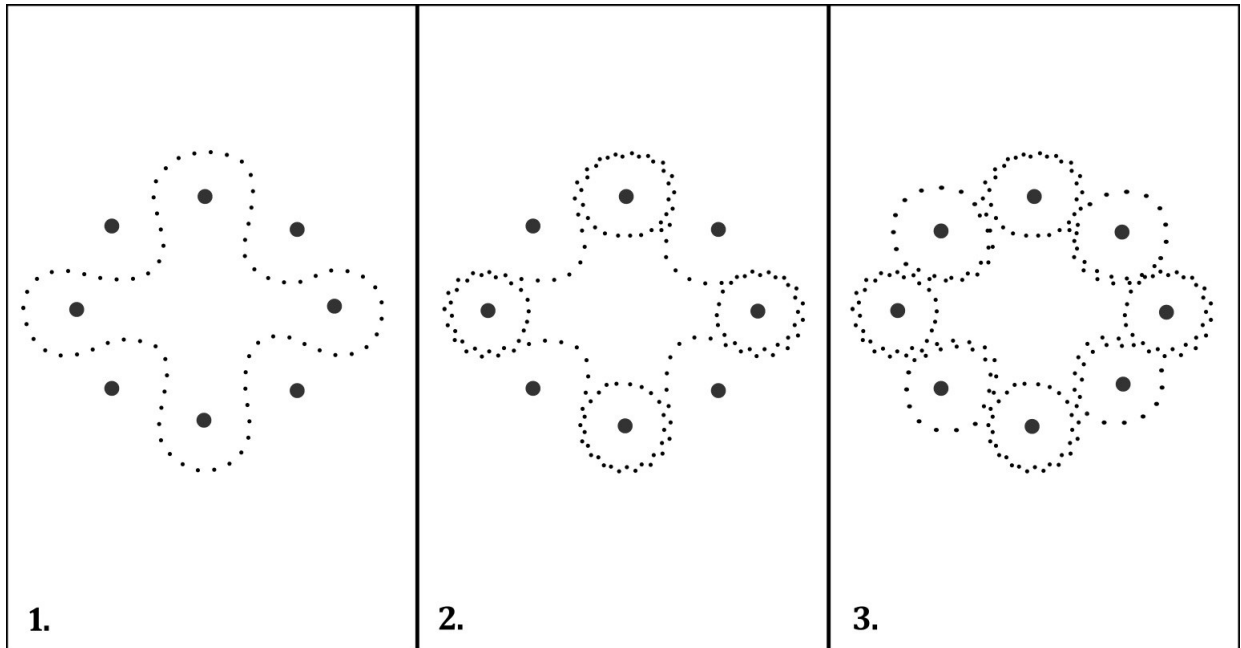


"In barrel racing and in life we get what we focus on, and we get better at what we practice."

– Heather Smith

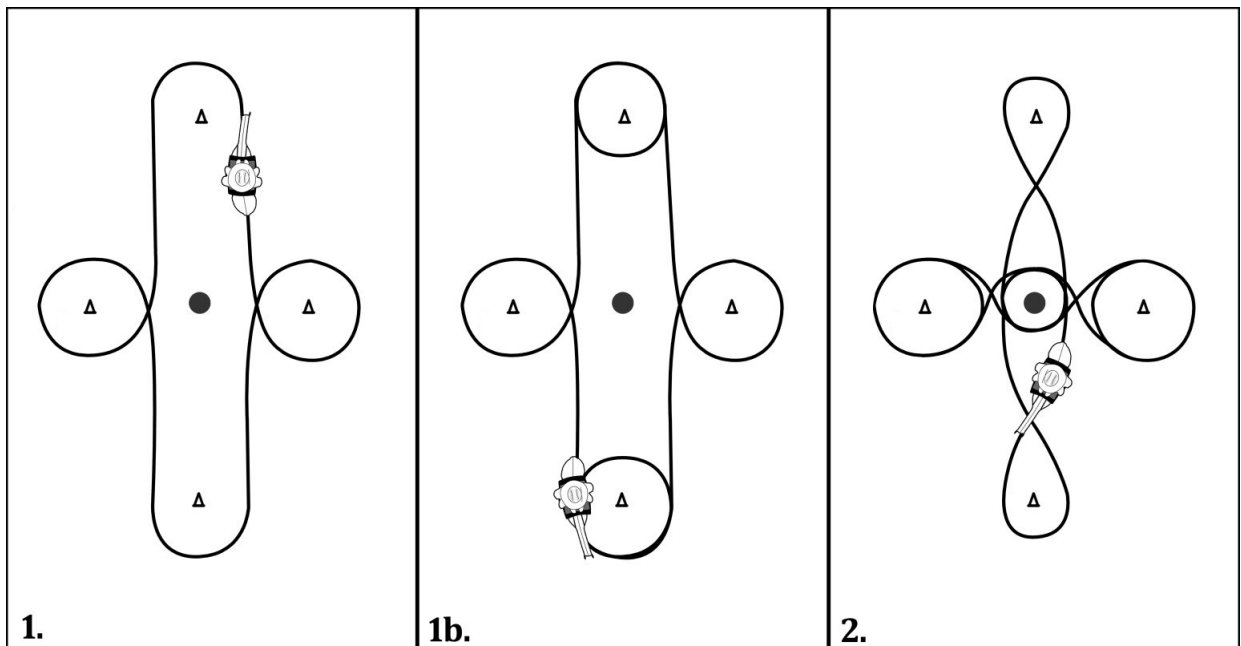
Exercise 37 – Switchback

The transition in our horse's body SHAPE (that occurs between the first and second barrel) must be quick and precise in a run – here's an opportunity to refine *their* and *our own* position and timing!



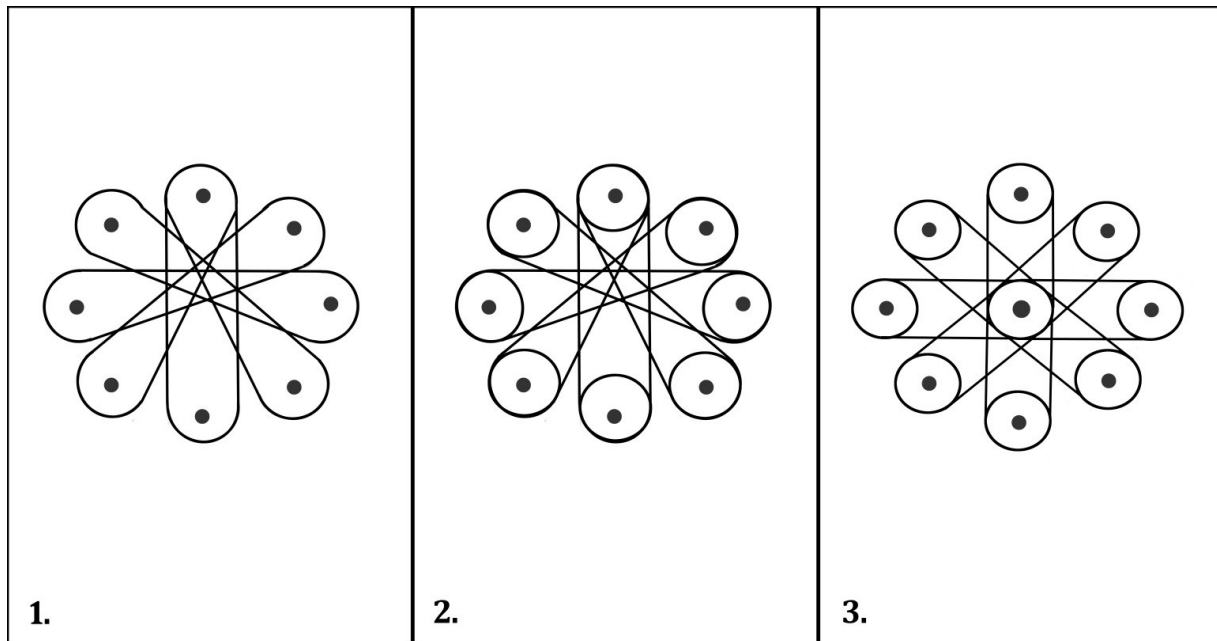
Exercise 38 – Pinwheel

Use this exercise to confirm good posture and form, while also practicing the soft full-body bend we've been building on A PATTERN that includes a barrel, thus more realistically simulating THE PATTERN. Incorporating repetitive counter arcs between circles creates better postural habits.



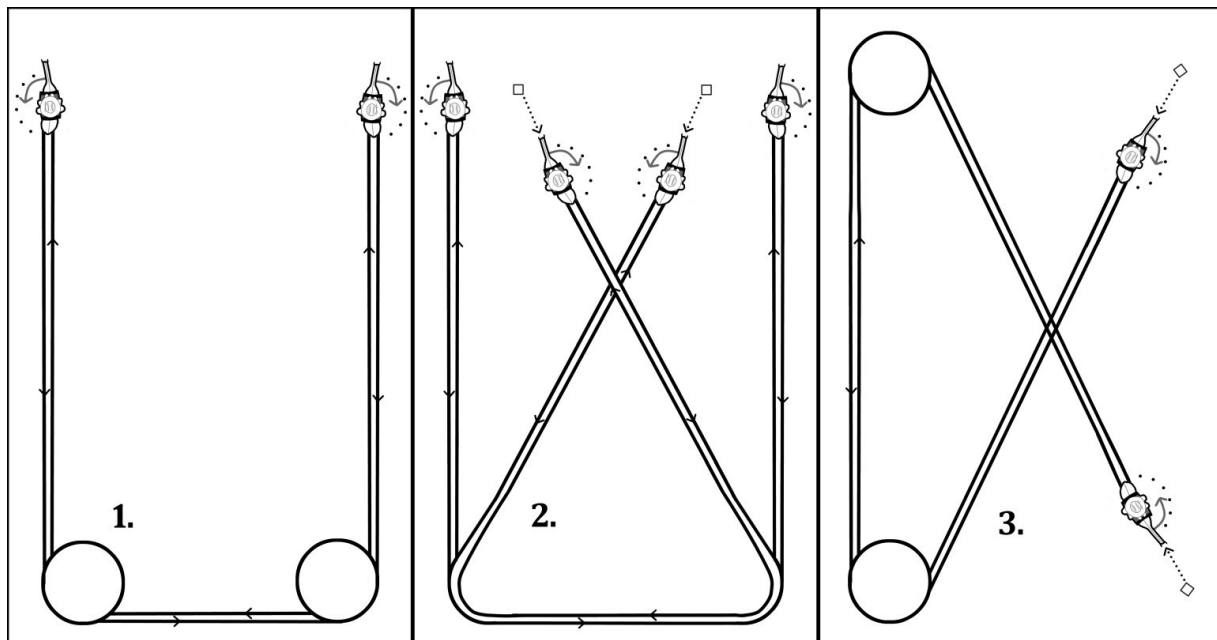
Exercise 39 – Flower Power

Straight lines + circles galore! Utilize this exercise to refine balance & rhythm, plus build strength.



Exercise 40 – Rock & Roll

Combine circles, straight lines & rollbacks at a high lope for an intense, game-changing exercise.



Tack and Bit Tips - See the book for insights on rein, bit, headstall adjustment and more!

Need for Speed

Exercise 41 – Conditioning Game Plan

Whether you need to build coordination, strength, or both (the foundational qualities of speed) these schedules will get you there.

Equine Conditioning Schedule that Targets IMPROVING COORDINATION	
Monday	Light workout
Tuesday	Regular workout
Wednesday	Regular workout
Thursday	Regular workout
Friday	Regular workout
Saturday	Challenging workout – run/sprint
Sunday	Day Off*

Equine Conditioning Schedule that Targets STRENGTH BUILDING	
Monday	Regular workout
Tuesday	Challenging workout
Wednesday	Day off*
Thursday	Regular workout
Friday	Regular workout
Saturday	Challenging workout – run/sprint
Sunday	Day Off*

Equine Conditioning Schedule for Maintaining STRENGTH and COORDINATION	
Monday	Day off*
Tuesday	Regular workout
Wednesday	Day off*
Thursday	Regular workout
Friday	Day off*
Saturday	Challenging workout – run/sprint
Sunday	Day Off*

Conditioning guidelines are excerpts from 'The Barrel Racer's Guide to Speed Development'

**Denotes days off with turnout and not stalled if possible - movement is important health!*

Exercise 42 – Fit to Fast

Get your horse in the fittest, *fastest* shape ever (make adjustments as you “see fit!”).

Traditional Program with Barrel Work		
Distance	Gait/Speed	Minutes
Month 1 - 3 Miles in 26 Min., 5 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7
½ Mile	Trot	4
½ Mile	Lope	2
½ Mile	Lope	2
½ Mile	Trot	4
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 2 - 4 Miles in 32 Min., 3 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
1 Mile	Trot	7
½ Mile	Lope	2
½ Mile	Lope	2
1 Mile	Trot	7
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 2 - 2 Miles + Training 2 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
½ Mile	Trot	4
½ Mile	Lope	2
½ Mile	Lope	2
Barrel Racing Exercises		20
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 3 - 5 Miles in 36 Min., 3 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
1 Mile	Trot	7
1 Mile	Lope	4
1 Mile	Lope	4
1 Mile	Trot	7
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 3 - 2 Miles + Training 2 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
½ Mile	Trot	4
½ Mile	Lope	2
½ Mile	Lope	2
Exercises + 100 yd. sprint		20
½ Mile	Walk	7

**Minutes are approximate.*

Use the EquiTrack app to time rides.

Interval Program without Barrel Work		
Distance	Gait/Speed	Minutes
Month 1 - 2 to 4 Miles, 5 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7
½ Mile	Trot	4
¼ Mile	Lope	1
¼ Mile	Lope	1
½ Mile	Walk	7
<i>*Each week add another ½ mile (2 min.) lope</i>		

Month 2 - 4 Miles in 29 Min., 3 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
1 Mile	Trot	7
1 Mile	Lope	4
1 Mile	Lope	4
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 2 - Interval Workout 2 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
½ Mile	Trot	4
¼ Mile	Lope	1
¼ Mile	Lope	1
2 Mile	Gallop	6
½ Mile	Walk	7
2 Mile	Gallop	6
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 3 - 4 Miles in 29 Min. 3 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
1 Mile	Trot	7
1 Mile	Lope	4
1 Mile	Lope	4
½ Mile	Walk	7

Month 3 - Interval Sprints 2 Days/Wk.		
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes
½ Mile	Trot	4
¼ Mile	Lope	1
¼ Mile	Lope	1
100 Yard	Sprint	20 Seconds
½ Mile	Trot	4 Minutes
100 Yard	Sprint	20 Seconds
½ Mile	Walk	7 Minutes

Exercise 43 – Rocket Launch

When you follow the steps below, you can essentially teach your horse to give you a quicker, higher quality response to a lighter, subtler cue. This is valuable because the less we have to use our legs, the more meaning they will have when we *do use them* for speed, and the better response we'll get. In my general riding, for example, I don't use my legs to go. I use them if my horse *doesn't* go. To step into a lope for example, it's as if there is a fishing line tied from my left seat bone to my horse's left hind leg. I just raise my energy, which is barely perceptible to the eye (my posture might straighten slightly) but my horse can feel it and I've trained him to understand this has meaning. Then I just lift and rotate my seat bone forward and instantly we step into an effortless lope. The more kicking and pulling we do to get a basic, low-level response, the more likely we'll *run out of bit* or *run out of leg* – meaning we can kick or pull as hard as we can and it's not enough; we end up maxing out. When this happens, it's simply a matter of the horse not having been trained to respond to subtler cues, which is a human problem more than a horse problem!

To install your "speed switch," plan on doing a couple of sprints in a large space with safe footing. A groomed racetrack is ideal, but a level field or even large arena can work. Although longer distances are best (at least 100 yards), you can run at a diagonal, or sprint along the long side of an arena, and collect on the short end, and sprint again on the long side.

Keep the "whoa & go" phases in mind as you ask for all your horse's speed (see **Exercise 11 - A to B** in **The First 51** and also refer to **Exercise 20 - Run & Rate** in *The Next 50*.)

As you spring, in the moment you are asking for and getting your horse's top end speed, your energy will be intense – you'll be leaned forward and fanning your legs. Just as you feel your horse reach his max, kiss or hiss to him, then tap his rear end firmly with an over & under to effectively get that extra boost of effort and create an association with your verbal cue. All it takes is a couple of times for most horses, and they'll quickly register "*what happens before what happens, happens.*" The next time you make a run, the horse will make the mental connection and offer more effort in response to your verbal cue.





Exercise 44 – Get in Gear

Try + Umph = Triumph! For more of both on the pattern, ask for a quick, dynamic ¼ rollback as you finish the turns, or ask for more speed in your slow work on the straight-aways between barrels. You can also (in an environment with ample space and safe footing) breeze your horse ALL the way out of the arena and beyond! Get your horse *thinking about* being free and the body will follow.

Exercise 45 – Daisy Clipper

“It’s important that our horses don’t react to our leg, but respond to it. With Dot Com, I spent a lot of time in the saddle “massaging” his sides with my legs until he stood still and relaxed, then rewarded him by stopping (releasing the pressure) and relaxing myself when he did. He learned to accelerate and go faster in response to leg pressure ONLY when my energy ALSO came up when I applied it.” – Heather Smith



Use *your legs* to lift your horse’s back, and practice “Long & Low” (**Exercise 44** in **The First 51**) on the pattern between barrels to teach your horse to run hard, low and flat on the straight-aways!

In It to Win It

Exercise 46 – Tools & Team Use the form below to consider, plan and upgrade your “Tools & Team.”

- Resourcefulness** – _____
- Arena** – _____
- Truck & Trailer** – _____
- Saddle & Pad** – _____
- Bits & Reins** – _____
- Veterinarian and Equine Dentist** – _____
- Body Worker(s) and Hoof Care Provider** – _____
- Mentor(s) and Inner Circle** – _____

Exercise 47 – Funds for Fun Analyze each area, then write out your action steps in the lines below.

#1. Get Real About Current Finances _____

I have honestly assessed my finances. I have a budget and closely track my income and expenses.

#2. Incoming/Outgoing Ratio Action Plan _____

I made a plan including at least three ways to increase my value/income and decrease expenses.

#3. Slay Debt and Start Saving _____

I live within my means, and have scheduled a monthly automatic allocation of funds to my savings.

#4. Know Your Worth and Value Your Goals _____

I value myself, my time and barrel racing goals by thinking big, and not selling myself short.

#5. Bust Through Money Blocks _____

I've analyzed how my beliefs around money may have held me back. I'm ready to tell a new story!

.....

Exercise 48 – Wide Open Spaces

When our life and environments aren't cluttered with excess activities, things and "busyness," this new found simplicity creates not just physical space but mental space – space for what's really important. Decluttering in all areas of life makes room for more of what we really want. It creates margins in which to think, create and concentrate without distractions. Without all the excess, we can have a new appreciation for what we love most. The simple act of getting rid of what's unnecessary makes us feel lighter, happier, freer, and creates more mental clarity and inspiration. The questions below will get you started with your home, barn, property, truck, trailer and tack!

Do I use and need this? Is this useful or beautiful? Does it make me happy? Would I replace this if I lost it?

.....

Exercise 49 – Life Integration Questions to ask for creating more barrel racing/life "balance."

- What areas of life are most important to me? WHAT do I want more of? WHY? Get to the core!
 - Go deeper - WHY do I care? What does having this mean to me? WHY is it important?
 - **Your Goal Roadmap.**
 - What are my short and long-term barrel racing goals? What would a "balanced" week look like?
 - What are the current time/schedule challenges, what needs to change and why?
 - **Say No.**
 - What responsibilities, commitments or relationships must I let go of?
 - **Reduce Distractions and Invest Time Wisely.**
 - How am I spending time each day that's not related to my goal? What can I replace it with?
 - Where and how must I set boundaries, or make changes to eliminate distractions?
 - **Optimize Productivity and Progress.**
 - What action steps are necessary to create more natural energy and focus?
 - How can I get more support, optimize and maximize everything I do? (outsource, delegate, etc.)
-

Exercise 50 – Heart & Soul

Keep the life, the enthusiasm and the energy intact by *falling* and *staying* in love with the process. Cherish every ride. Make each run like it was your last. Most of all, seek (+ love, obey, follow, serve, trust and pursue your barrel racing goals) with *all your heart* by staying connected to *why you started*.