



## BILLINGS SADDLE CLUB

May 2006

Alkali Creek Road, PO BOX 385 Billings, Montana 59103

### 2006 BOARD MEMBERS

<b>President</b>	Pat Cole	962-3002	
Past President	Josie Skibstad	373 6524	<a href="mailto:jskibstad@imt.net">jskibstad@imt.net</a>
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President (Membership)	Susan Malmstrom	373-6736	<a href="mailto:suem@tbems.com">suem@tbems.com</a>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President (Horse Activities)	James Sorlie	259-9995	<a href="mailto:sorlie@imt.net">sorlie@imt.net</a>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice President (Social Activities)	Nancy Bjelland	373-0045	<a href="mailto:Nancy_Bjelland@blm.gov">Nancy_Bjelland@blm.gov</a>
Corresponding Secretary	Polly Namen	33-9400	
Recording Secretary	Maria Schillinger	670-8785	
Treasurer	Doris Gillespie	656-9977 or 861-9977	
3 Year Director	Sandie Green	373-9029	<a href="mailto:sam7sell@yahoo.com">sam7sell@yahoo.com</a>
2 Year Director	Debbie Magilke	252-7638	<a href="mailto:ddmag@imt.net">ddmag@imt.net</a>
1 Year Director	Sue Schwend	445-2436 or 670-8028	
One-Day Horse Shows	Beth Anderson	671-7522	<a href="mailto:anderart@180com.net">anderart@180com.net</a>
Stirrup Editor	Polly Namen	633-9400	
Gate Combination	2222		
Club Website	<a href="http://www.billingssaddleclub.org">www.billingssaddleclub.org</a> (for access to member restricted area, enter "member" and "2222")		

The June Board meeting will be held Monday, June 5, 2006 @ 6pm at the clubhouse. All BSC members are always welcome to attend.

**The SPRING TRAIL RIDE** will be held **Sunday, May 14<sup>th</sup>** at 10 am just North of Shepherd, located on the BLM "Ah-Nei" property. This is hilly, sagebrush country – absolutely beautiful. To get there, just drive North thru the town of Shepherd, turn East/right on Scandia road, turn left/North on CA Road, going past the feedlot and a couple of miles past the pavement until you reach the buck/pole fencing. There is a big loop turn-around on the right/East side of the road. Please park in the grassy areas, not on the turn-around loop. Bring your own lunches and drinks. NO DOGS are allowed on the ride. Dogs at the trail-head must be tied or contained. We're expecting a good turn-out and are excited to see YOU there!!!!!!!

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **New Members:**

\***Kerry & Eva Schaff** 690 Cushman Road Lavina, MT 59046 667-2155. Kerry is a farmer/rancher and Eva is a teacher. Children: Carly (1997) and Rodney (2000).

\***Jack & Beth Oswald** RR1 – Box 45 I Broadview, MT 59015 667-2146. Jack is a truck driver and Beth is an Administrative Associate. Children: Ciara Fandek 1/25/91, Amberli Oswald 1/31/98, Gus Oswald 6/28/00.

\***Mike Sartorie** 1916 Hawthorne Lane Billings, MT 59105 245-9599. Mike is a farmer. Child: Jordyn 6/23/00.

\***Rema & Bill Schelm** 2606 Alkali Creek Road Billings, MT 59105 254-7271.

\***Heidi L. Pfosch** PO Box 81313 Billings, MT 59108 670-2547 Heidi is a land surveyor for the BLM

### **New Applicants:**

\* **Ed & Tami Lorenz** 2223 S 54<sup>th</sup> St Billings, MT 59106 652-5312 Child: Megan 6/15/87

\* **Tim Mack** 2024 Ida Lane Billings, MT 59105 698-4922 Tim is a farrier

\* **Jerry Beagley** 6353 Osness Road Shepherd, MT 59079 373-6039

## **Upcoming Events outside of BSC**

**YRS Young Riders Series** to be held every Tuesday night @ 6:30 (entries open at 5:30) here at the saddle club.

Kids run barrels, poles, goat tying and breakaway roping. Terrific opportunity to get your kids involved in rodeo competition. Many of our club's kids participate. Membership is \$35/yr for individual or \$60 family. Entry fees are \$4 per event, \$5 for roping. For more information Glenn Paulsen @ 373-9337

**Roundup Rendezvous Endurance Ride**, May 13 & 14, base camp is the Fairgrounds on the E edge of Roundup.

For more information call Alan or Susie at 323-2403 days or 323-1180 evenings.

**Thirty Mile Stage Stop Endurance Ride**, Labor Day Weekend, base camp is 30 miles N of Billings on Hwy 87.

For more information contact Cindy Wagner at 652-0830.

**Creekside Dressage Schooling Show** May 21 at Creekside Ranch, S of Huntley. For more information, contact Barbara Ramlow at 348-2280 or [crkside@nemontel.net](mailto:crkside@nemontel.net).

**Creekside Dressage (recognized USEF, USDF, RMDS, and MDS) Show** June 3 & 4 at Creekside Ranch, S of Huntley. For more information, contact Barbara Ramlow at 348-2280 or [crkside@nemontel.net](mailto:crkside@nemontel.net).

**Below is the 2006 committee list for upcoming events.** If you are unable to work your assigned event, you must find a replacement as soon as possible. Last year there were several times when committee members did not show up. This placed a huge burden on those that did. I may not be able to attend each event this year as I have in the past, so I may not be able to pick up the slack. As Doris says, MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK! So even if it is not your assigned event, if you can help out, it is greatly appreciated. The more cooperation we give each other, the more fun everyone has.

**If your name is first on the date listed, you are the lucky person to be the event chairman.**

\***If you are the chairman for the Jackpot Barrels**, contact Sue Malmstrom to see what is needed to do before the event. Then contact each member of your committee.

\***If you are the chairman for a Horse Show**, please contact Beth Anderson ahead of time, and she will fill you in on the details. Then contact each member of your team to coordinate the duties.

\***If you are the chairman for an O-Mok-See**, please contact Jim Sorlie the week before the event to work out the games you would like to run. That way we can send out an e-mail letting everyone know what events will be featured so they may practice ahead of time. You will then contact each team member to assign their duties.

(I will not assign anyone to the **Big Sky State Games**. This will be totally a volunteer effort. I will include the details and benefits for volunteering in next month's Stirrup.)

Please feel free to call or e-mail Jim Sorlie at anytime if you should have a question or concern. The year is off to a great start, so let's keep the momentum going!

In advance,

Thank you,

Jim

## HORSE ACTIVITIES CALENDAR FOR 2006

May 6	Hairy Horse Show
May 7	Clinic & Open O-Mok-See 10am
May 10	Jackpot Barrel Race 6pm – Gail Schoen, Pat Loge, Phyllis Brosz, Paula Harris
May 14	Spring Trail Ride tba – Jim Sorlie 259-9995
May 17	Jackpot Barrel Race 6pm - Kellee Pierce, JJ Seilstad, Alyce Hager, Carol Brumfield
May 21	Open O-MOK-SEE 2pm – Curt/Sue Schwend, Larry/Katie Schwend, George/Stacy Nelson
May 29	Open O-MOK-SEE 2pm – Jason/Sharlotte Harkins, Greg/Cindy Bergum, Mike Witt, Linda Hegle, Kay Lynn Allen
June 2	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm – Steve/Pat Cole, Terri Bakken, Brian/Candy Christoferson, Kerry/Eva Schaff
June 3 & 4	Horse Show Clinic -
June 11	Horse Show 9am – Mark/Lisa Lenhardt, Jan Taylor, Chad/Jodie Schaff
June 16	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm – Bill/Roxann Grice, Karen Bliss, Andy/Nancy Bjelland, Jerry Beagley
June 19	Rainout date
June 25	Summer Trail Ride tba
June 30	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm – Brad/Sandy Green, Heath/Linda Hoffman, Shawn/Nikki Shelhamer
July 2	Horse Show 9am – Tim/Lorie Trafford, Jan Falstad, Jerry/Tammy Gran, Rod Leafdale
July 7	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm – Shannen Clark, Tammi Muri, Jimmie/Connie Jimison, Bob/Linda Auch
July 8 & 9	BIG SKY STATE GAMES 9am
July 16-21	National O-Mok-See @ Gillette, WYO ( <a href="http://www.omoksee.com">www.omoksee.com</a> ) -
July 28	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm – Tim/Cindy McDonnell, Jack/Beth Oswald, Heidi Pfosch, Mark/Kathy Adams
August 6	Horse Show 9am – Josie Skibstad, Randall/Sonja Miller, Joe/Ingrid Allen, Frank/Dodie Zweifel
August 11	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 7pm Troy/Polly Namen, Carrie Daniels-Ballard, Shane/Sarita Stolt, Bill/Rema Schelm
August 20	Rainout date
August 27	Intra-Club O-MOK-SEE 2pm – Rock/Brenda Mooney, Lane Carano, Kristie Spring, Make Sartorie, Tom Malmstrom
Sept 2 & 3	State O-MOK-SEE @ Cut Bank
Sept 10	Horse Show 9 am – Steve/Cindy Sundheim, Dave/Heather Gellner, Joe/Brenda Kirkland, Judy Kirkland
Sept 17	Memorial O-MOK-SEE 2pm – Board Members
Sept 24	Fall Trail Ride tba

**SAFETY** – Our biggest concern for all the equestrian events is SAFETY. Many club members are not yet experienced horsemen, so we all need to help each other out when it comes to safe horsemanship practices.

*This month we will focus on safe tying practices.*

If your horse needs to be tied while on the Saddle Club grounds, you must tie to your trailer. **Please note that we will not allow any tying to any fences on the Saddle Club grounds.**

The best way to have a well-mannered horse that ties safely, without pawing, pulling, etc., is to give them a LOT of experience, starting at home. Tying your horse up often and for extended periods of time helps them learn patience, it indirectly battles the herd-bound separation anxiety issue, and most importantly it makes your horse safe and pleasant to be around. Be certain that you know some effective knots to use - ask for help from a respected horseman if you're unsure about your knots.

We should only tie horses that have had successful groundwork - have learned the whole pressure/release concept. Once this concept is ingrained, we should only tie with a halter and lead that will not break (many horsemen prefer a rope halter, with no hardware to break, and no metal to scratch up your trailer), and we should tie only to a trailer, tree, or post (never a rail) that cannot be broken by the horse. If a horse breaks something he is tied to, then has that "thing" hanging on the end of his leadrope (a panel, board, rail, etc) he will be terrified and will flee, taking the "thing" with him, potentially harming many others and himself in his flight.

Make sure there are no sharp edges within reach (wheel wells, lights, reflectors, nails) in case they paw or rub. Your horse should have only enough slack to hold his head at his normal, comfortable height. Any more slack than that is asking for trouble. We have all seen people tie long in order to enable their horse to be able to reach their hay or a bucket or pan, but there are much better alternatives with today's versatile bucket and hay-bag options. Many injuries have been caused to horses and fences and trailers due to horses tied with too much slack in their leadrope. Make sure also that there is nothing within reach that your horse can get his halter (if he rubs) or his leadrope

hooked on, such as a trailer door handle, or a rail that sticks out beyond the end of the post. The most important safety tip is to watch the true horsemen you're exposed to - see what they do - ask questions. True horsemen are always learning, and are always willing to share the knowledge they've picked up in their journey thus far.

### **BIKINI IN A BLIZZARD.....**

The standard felt cowboy hat provides shade, and keeps rain and snow from falling down your neck. But it provides about as much impact protection to a rider as does a bikini in a blizzard.

Brain injuries account for 60 percent of equestrian related fatalities. In a single year there are an estimated 6,000 horseback riding related brain injuries in the United States. A fall from 2 feet can cause permanent brain damage, yet a horse elevates a rider 8 feet or more above the ground by simply being mounted (consider the heights reached by a bucking or jumping horse). A human skull can be shattered by an impact of 2.5 to 7 mph, that's why we see bicyclists wearing helmets. Speed event horses can easily gallop at *40 mph* (have you ever seen a jockey without a helmet?). Most death and serious head injury can be prevented by wearing ASTM or SEI equestrian-approved helmets that fit correctly and have the harness firmly applied. (Bicyclist helmets are not designed to protect the head from falls of heights that can occur if a rider is catapulted skyward enroute to their impact.) The time has come that we set aside ego (and hair vanity, girls) and recognize the sense of wearing helmets. Your hair won't look very pretty when it's shaved for brain surgery.....

## **The Barrel Races held April 29 and 30, 2006 were a huge success.**

None of which would have been possible without the help of the following club members: Doris Gillespie, Polly Namen, Doug Mahugh, Rebecca Schreiter, Maria Schillinger, Shirlee Parini, Cherie Hocevar, Teri Davis, Kay Lynn Allen, Linda Crowder, Candy Christoferson, Jim & Kitty Sorlie, Charlene Murphy, Sue Malmstrom, Brenda Mooney, Nancy Bjelland, Teri Bakken, Pat Cole, Sue Schwend, and anyone I may have forgotten.

This event would not have been possible without the support and generous donations from the following club members: A Head of Our Time (Carol Brumfield), Bear Mountain Silversmiths (Shane & Sarita Stolt), Big Sky Beauty Supply (Jim & Kitty Sorlie); Cooper Tools (Greg Gillespie), Doris Gillespie, Cherie Hocevar, Lockwood Auto Salvage (Tom & Liza Malmstrom), Platinum Performance (Sue Malmstrom), Charlene Murphy, Roberts Ranch Supply (The Schwends), Three Can Tango (Shirlee Parini), Carquest & Valley Welders (Tammy Gran).

Also a big thank you to everyone who purchased raffle tickets.

### **Results:**

#### **April 29, 2006**

##### **WPRA Stockman Bank Divisional Tour (25 Entries)**

1. Candi Zion - 17.336, 2. Peggy Schluter-17.376, 3. Joeleen Ottun - 17.394, 4. Carolyn Vietor - 17.687, 5. Darae Larson 17.718, 6. Tannis Darnell 17.758, 7/8 Maria Gee 17.811, 7/8 Julie Lenoir 17.819

##### **Open 4D Barrels (56 Entries)**

1D: 1. Mark Bugni 17.737, 2. Nacona Pauley 17.803, 3. Pat Loge 17.890, 4. Darcy Anderson 17.951, 5. Sue Malmstrom 17.998

2D: 1. Alyce Hager 18.251, 2. Tannis Darnell 18.317, 3. Kristi Spring 18.341, 4. Kitty Ryan 18.382

3D: 1. Stacey Bauman 18.899, 2. Lana Tibbets 18.901, 3. Jessie Cameron 18.967

4D: 1. Kitty Sorlie 19.986, 2. Jan Pauley 20.054, 3. Muri Cole 20.454

##### **Youth 3D Barrels (5 Entries)**

1D: 1. Alex Cole 18.606

2D: 1. Muri Cole 20.039

3D: 1. Logan Schaff 22.091

##### **Open 3d Poles (11 Entries)**

1D: 1. Pat Cole 23.485, 2. Muri Cole 24.372

2D: 1. Kay Lynn Allen 24.957

3D: 1. Patty Propp 25.52

#### **April 30, 2006**

##### **WPRA Stockman Bank Divisional Tour (21 Entries)**

1. Shirlee Parini 17.574, 2. Maria Gee 17.612, 3. Peggy Schluter 17.670, 4. Carolyn Vietor 17.688, 5. Cally Goyins 17.745, 6. Heather Hart Schwenke 17.786

##### **Open 4D Barrels (51 Entries)**

1D: 1. Tannis Darnell 17.871, 2. Jill Ferdina Miller 18.079, 3. Lana Tibbetts 18.084, 4. Heather Hart Schwenke 18.118, 5. Darcy Mapston 18.141

2D: 1. Alex Cole 18.382, 2. Julie Lenoir 18.392, 3. Kori Cross 18.421, 4. Jana Perry 18.484

3D: 1. Kori Cross 18.934, 2. Kristi Spring 18.954, 3. June Tibbets 19.001

*continued.....*

4D: 1. Bill Sturman 19.992, 2. Kitty Sorlie 20.111, 3. Amy Sisko 20.490

**Youth 3D Barrels (7 Entries)**

1D: 1. Alex Cole 18.410, 2. Heather Knerr 18.440

3D: 1. Shay Shelhamer 21.297

**Open 3D Poles (10 Entries)**

1D: 1. Niki Obie 21.531, 2. Heather Knerr 22.481

2D: 1. Sue Malmstrom 22.615

3D: 1. Kay Lynn Allen 24.931

Open 4D Barrels Average Winner: Sue Malmstrom

Open 3D Youth Barrels Average Winner: Alex Cole

Open 3D Poles Average Winner: Pat Cole

Total Money Paid Out: \$5,520 – Total Value of Prizes Given Away: \$5,000 +

**O-Mok-See events** are designed to provide the horse and rider with a fun challenge. Events, or “games” as they are sometimes called range from the traditional barrel race that you see at rodeos to pole bending, and the quick flag race. Some of the lesser known games include western jumping, a favorite of the younger competitors, and barrel & stake, a race that tests the stamina of both horse and rider.

O-Mok-See even has its own extreme category in the form of a number of team events, the first being Devil's cowhide; a team of two, one rides the horse, the other a “cow hide” (a real hide was used in the past, now a canvas tarp is used) which is pulled by the horse via a rope dallied to the saddle horn, down the lane, around a barrel and back. The hide rider hangs on for the ride of his life!

Another popular team event is Rock n' Roll, four riders and one bareback horse make up this team in which one rider starts mounted on the horse, races to the turn line at the end of the lane, picks up the second rider and races back to the start/finish line. There the first rider jumps off, the second rider scoots forward and turns the horse back to go pick up rider number three, then its back to the start/finish line where rider two jumps off. This continues until the fourth rider crosses the start/finish line by his or her self.

These are just a few events. With so many different games, every rider, from the beginner to the daredevil, will find an event that he or she is bound to love! Join us!



**“There is a way to train a horse where when you get done you’ve got the horse. On his own ground. A good horse will figure things out on his own. You can see what’s in his heart. ”**

**Cormac McCarthy**  
From *Cities of the Plain*



Travis Lilja takes his new Appaloosa colt, "In The Nick of Time", for a walk recently in Bozeman. The 14-year-old from Plains, MT won Nick from *Taylor Made Appaloosa* of Huntley in a 4-H contest.

Our BSC member, Jan Taylor, of Taylor Made Appaloosas, was the generous donor. WOW, Jan, what an incredibly cool thing you've done! Travis will be forever blessed by your gift of Nick.

## Classified Advertisements

**WANTED:** Gentle family horse for novice rider that will probably ride about twice weekly - will have a great home. Call 245-9599 ask for Mike Sartorie

**FOR SALE:** CircleY flex-lite *barrel saddle*, roughout and tooling, dropped rigging for freedom of movement and close contact, 14" green suede padded seat, a good-looking saddle. Truly like new – hardly used, daughter no longer needs. \$1000 OBO (is \$1400 new). Call Polly at 633-9400 for more information or to view/try.

**FOR SALE:** Women's size 6 ½ custom-made bull-hide boots Al's Bootery Nocona. Brand new, never worn. \$200 value would like \$100. Call Sandie at 373-9029 or 697-0577.

**FOR RENT:** (Information via Kitty Sorlie) 10 acres of summer pasture near Fromberg. Contact Doug and Joan Maier at 668-7575.

If you have (or someone you know has) horses, tack, trucks, trailers or any other horse related equipment **for sale** (or **wanted** items) that would interest our membership, contact the STIRRUP editor (Polly Namen 633-9400) with your ad information.

## MEETING MINUTES – April board meeting

The Billings Saddle Club Board meeting was called to order by Pat Cole, on April 3rd, 2006 at 6:00 pm.

**Present:** Maria Schillinger, Nancy Bjelland, Sue Schwend, Sue Malmstrom, Polly Namen, Jim Sorlie, Debbie Magilke, and Doris Gillespie

**Minutes:** The March 2006 minutes were read. Sue Malmstrom motioned to accept the minutes as corrected, and Doris Gillespie seconded the motion. The board approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Doris Gillespie presented the Treasurer's Report for March 2006. No outstanding bills. Sue Malmstrom motioned to accept the report, and Sue Schwend seconded the motion. The board approved.

**Correspondence:** Polly Namen presented correspondence.

**Horse Activities:** Jim Sorlie presented horse activities. Jim is putting together a horse show committee meeting for April. There will be an O-Mok-See clinic on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Jim will also be scheduling a practice horse show on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Membership:** Sue Malmstrom has been calling members to remind them to turn in their membership applications.

There are five new applications to be published in the Stirrup: Kerry and Eva Schaff, Jack and Beth Oswald, Rema and Bill Schelm, Heidi Pfosch, and Mike Sartorie.

**Social Activities:** Nancy will be ordering pizza for the workday.

**Rentals:** Debbie Magilke went over the rental schedule.

**Stirrup:** Polly Namen is looking for input on the Stirrup. Polly has been emailing the Stirrup out to the club members.

**Unfinished Business:** The YRS will be assisting with the clean up day in April.

Sue Schwend motioned to allow Sue to order water for the arena if needed for the April barrel race and Pat Cole seconded the motion. The board approved.

**Director Reports:** Sue Schwend will be checking over the fence work before the workday.

**Announcements:** The next Billings Saddle Club Board meeting will be Monday, May 1st, 2006 at the BSC Clubhouse.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Schillinger

## Integrate your horsemanship clinic exercises into showday schooling

By Sylvana Smith (from the Eclectic Horseman)

It was a Wednesday schooling show in January, halfway between Aberdeen and nowhere, a perfect opportunity to field-test progress with a project horse who had a reputation for completely losing her cool at horse shows. I expected that our good work at home and clinics would need refreshing in the show environment, scene of her past meltdowns, but I had picked the ideal, low-profile venue for our debut. Wrong. It hadn't occurred to me that a midweek show in the Sandhills would draw all the illuminati of Southern Pines horse society.

True to reputation, my mount completely lost her cool in the warm-up area. Thank goodness for the skills we had brought home from Buck's clinic two months earlier. One-rein stops, yin-and-yang circles, and deep bending lines were building safe harbor for the nervous Thoroughbred, and we would soon ease into the day. Meanwhile, a friend overheard Eight-Time Olympian asking PanAm Games Silver Medalist if "the girl on the leaping horse" would be okay. PanAm Silver Medalist assured Eight-Time Olympian that I had matters in hand, or soon would. The "leaping horse" and I stayed together and put in some creditable jumper rounds, so I considered the showday a success. Nonetheless, when Eight-Time Olympian published the next issue of his magazine, he featured a stern editorial about people "bringing unrideable horses to shows" and having to "wheel them around in circles." Do you think he was talking about l'il ole me and my Leaping Mare and our one-rein stops? Ya wonder? Eight-Time Olympian can question my strategies if he wishes, and question whether Leaping Mare should have been at that little schooling show in the first place. No one else at the show knew where we had been, what we had done, and what my untraditional strategies were achieving. Surely no one even noticed that the mare was a perfect lady at her combined test two weeks later, or that she won so many events that year that she earned end-of-year tricolors in two jumper series, plus North Carolina Horse of the Year in the three-foot horse trials division. Ringside critics notwithstanding, this experience cemented my belief in the value of applying horsemanship clinic exercises to the show-ring warm-up.

If you've been to a few good horsemanship clinics, you've seen how simple, carefully designed exercises work magic to soften, supple, and relax horses; tune up their performance in every way. Why not integrate these proven maneuvers into your ride when you need them most right before being judged in a show or trial? Be forewarned that you'll face two opposing forces: (A) the obvious value of the clinic exercises for getting the best performance from your horse, and (B) the ever-present possibility of having your methods misinterpreted. Riding in a clinic of kindred spirits is quite different from riding at a showground of traditional hunter/jumper or dressage riders. If you want to use clinic exercises for maximum show-ring value without alienating your fellow competitors, some commonsense considerations apply. Within the do's and don'ts below if you have the experience to evaluate what your horse needs, the innovation to choreograph a truly unique and tailored warm-up ride, and most of all, the willingness to be different you can get great results by extending valued clinic exercises to your showday prep.

**DO** start your warm-up on the ground. You set the tone of the day with every interaction with your horse, starting with how you unload him from the trailer and lead him around to check out the sights. Good groundwork technique, faithfully followed at home, is easy to overlook in showday excitement. Yet this is a great opportunity for some unobtrusive halter-rope work. There's no need to belabor it or draw attention to yourself. Just pay attention to small details and they'll add up. If my mount arrives at the showgrounds very excited and distracted, I break out my Virtual Round Pen. To the untrained eye, my Virtual Round Pen looks just like a cotton canvas longe line. But used creatively, it defines an invisible round pen in which we can get comfortable hooking on, changing eyes, and stepping the hindquarter around.

**DO** consider all the real estate options. If your horse gets fussy and tense in a crowded warm-up area, consider starting your warm-up in a quiet area on the edge of the parking field, or a warm-up area for another phase, then migrating to the busy warm-up area when you're both ready. In the warm-up arena, resist the temptation to stick to the perimeter, as other competitors are likely to be doing. Think back to your last clinic, and how often you came off the rail in your work. Use all the real estate for maximum results.

**DON'T** drill on exercises that are going well. Under the stresses of riding in public, it's tempting to stay within your comfort zone and repeat things your horse does well. That's a fine way to avoid public mistakes, but an ineffective way to brush up all the skills you'll be judged on in 10 minutes. If something is going well, move on to something else; not only a different exercise but a different type of exercise lateral to straight, slow work to faster gait, "bridled up" to loose rein, collected to stretched, precise to free-flowing.

**DO** be considerate of your fellow competitors. Dozens of riders can share a warm-up arena together because they all follow predictable patterns. Training and First-Level dressage riders, for example, will ride 20-meter circles, diagonals, the centerline, transitions up or down one gait, and not much else. Hunter/jumper riders will trot and canter the perimeter, pass down the jumping lane in one direction only, and call a heads-up if they're going to do anything different. If you're sharing the arena with a batch of dressage or hunter/jumper riders, you can fairly well predict where they will be and avoid collisions.

But your nontraditional movements; one-rein stops, wiggly lines, backing in circles, and such; completely break the pattern. Be considerate of fellow riders and don't expect them to predict your unpredictable paths.

**DO** tailor your warm-up for the event. Each clinic exercise is designed to promote a different skill; and you won't have time to do everything; so pick and choose from the repertoire to fine-tune the skills you'll need most in your upcoming ride. At a one-day horse trial, for instance, you'll ride three completely different warmups for three distinctly different phases. The dressage phase demands steady rhythm, suppleness, relaxation, and balance. Your warm-up for dressage therefore will likely include one-rein stops, soft feel, deep bending lines, and frequent transitions. The cross-country phase, in contrast, demands speed, forwardness, and agility. You'll probably drop the soft feel exercise and focus on upward transitions and transitions within a gait to balance for obstacles. The stadium-jumping phase demands precision response to aids at speed, so you'll probably go back to the lateral exercises that were all but dropped from the cross-country warm-up.

**DON'T** wield the exercises like punishments. If you're going to compete at Fort Bragg, be prepared for the wind to snap the flags in the middle of the warm-up, and cargo jets to roar overhead from the Air Force base next door. In this kind of environment, one-rein stops have created soothing time-outs for my sensitive Thoroughbred. The comforting benefits of this exercise would be lost if I snatched or grabbed the rein or kicked the hindquarter over in anxiety or frustration. It's easy to get angry when our darlings embarrass us with public antics, but anger doesn't work. The fast track to success is to offer safe zones, not more points of worry.

**DO** tailor your warm-up for your horse's unique needs. In a perfect world, we'd have all the classic clinic exercises polished up all the time. Each exercise builds on some other foundation and serves as foundation for yet another exercise. Everything is interdependent. We know that. But on showday, you have to go with what you've got, and you've got limited time to warm up before each class. There's no time to run through the full repertoire of 14-20 exercises from a typical clinic; even though you know they are all integral to your total training program. With the constraints of reality and show schedules, the answer is to intelligently tailor your warm-up strategy; picking and choosing the most effective exercises to address your horse's unique issues.

Here's a brief set of idea-starters for typical warm-up arena issues:

Above the bit. Start back at the trailer with the groundwork exercise to lower the horse's head, working your hand back toward the withers so you can revisit this exercise under saddle later. Watch your bridling technique; the horse's head should be waist-high or lower. In the warm-up area, start with loose-rein bending lines, lots of deep wavy figures, and ease into 5-meter circles with changes of bend through the center of the circle. If the horse is tense, use one-rein stops as soothing time-outs, and then modified one-rein stops where you release the rein when you get lateral softness, without necessarily coming to a full stop. When this is going well, ease into a few steps of soft feel, then holding the soft feel at one gait, then through transitions.

Behind the bit. The horse that travels "behind the bit" can be traveling freely forward without being truly "forward" in the dressage sense. For this kind of horse, I go easy on exercises that squelch forwardness, such as the soft feel exercise and one-rein stops. Instead, I focus on upward transitions with energy, perhaps going uphill, if the warm-up area is hilly. I'd also pay close attention to my hands to make sure I'm providing a reliable, soft connection for him to trust--not a waffling, flimsy contact that the horse can't find.

Fussy, fretful. This horse benefits from 10 minutes in the Virtual Round Pen before tacking up, then a gradual opportunity to migrate to the warm-up area from a quieter area of the showgrounds. I rely on one-rein stops and modified one-rein stops to create safe zones for a fretful mount. Careful though; it's easy to overdo this exercise and end up badgering or over confining the horse when he might just need to stride out on a loose rein for a while. If the horse is fearful, I'll offer lots of quiet stroking encouragement. Verbal encouragement "Eassssy, eassssy, easssy" --seems to have the opposite effect, so I just keep quiet, try to have a sense of humor about it, and ride as confidently as an electric horse will allow.

Stiff through the body. A few minutes of halter-rope work, breaking the hindquarter over in several different ways, sets the stage for success under saddle. You won't see many straight lines in my warm-up with this horse. We'll ride 10-foot-diameter circles on loose reins and change the bend through the center of the circle. We'll ride deep wiggly lines on leg aids, looking for a clear lateral step of the hindquarters. We'll do turns on the forehand with the reins dropped. We'll back in circles. For my event horse that travels slightly haunches-in along the rail during dressage tests, we'll do circles haunches-out and sidepass in our warm-up to tune up response to the leg behind the girth, even though those skills aren't required in any of his tests.

Stiff through jaw and neck. Even though the bulging jaw and stiff neck seem to be the problem, the real problem is that this horse's feet aren't free. This is a common problem we face when our horses are distracted by the excitement of the show scene. Jot down the full set of lateral/bending exercises from your last clinic. Write them on your arm if you have to, because these are going to save the dressage ride from being a string of 5s, or from having your hunter hack look more like a giraffe. Bringing the head around, one-rein stops, yin-and-yang circles, wiggly lines, serpentines, soft feel exercises all these things will massage the tension and brace from the jaw, poll, and neck while freeing up the feet.

Rushing, quick, tense. Look to exercises that build relaxation and quell forwardness, like one-rein stops, small circles, wavy lines, and backing in circles. If you have the space, slow the horse with circles rather than two reins. Remember that your warm-up is yours by definition up until the moment you enter the arena; you can be different. My sister's rushy Second Level dressage horse gets tense and pulls during the pre-ride laps around the arena, but he's all business once he gets into the arena. So, whereas everybody else trots around the outside of the arena before their tests, my sister walks until well after the bell rings, and picks up a trot only as she enters the arena. She now consistently gets top scores.

Bolting and bucking. Hooking on in the Virtual Round Pen can give the over-energetic horse a chance to blow off a little steam. If you have a Jekyll-n-Hyde character who stays quite calm until some surprise moment in a crowded warm-up, one-rein stops can defuse tension and keep you from interfering with other riders. Use your judgment though, knowing your horse. Sometimes riding through a little bolt and continuing on loose reins works better than over-confining. Leaping Mare progressed to the point where Ms. Hyde didn't appear in the warm-up until we got to cantering. Respecting the safety of other riders, at shows we usually didn't canter in the group, and sometimes didn't canter a single step before entering the dressage arena or heading out of the cross-country start box. This offbeat strategy worked out just dandy, until we hit on a better strategy. Now, before going near the dressage warm-up, we don cross-country gear and have a breezy 20-minute gallop around an open field, if available. I've never done this with any other horse for any other dressage warm-up, but it's magic for this high-energy princess, so I do what works. Be willing to be different, and to trust your own observations.

Dull to the leg. The leaping Thoroughbred princess has a placid, stoic brother whose steadiness has earned us nice dressage scores, but without the light response that makes a ride a joy. With him, now I'm more careful to notice every transition, even the first steps away from the trailer after mounting. I try to build in crispness with every step he takes on the ground or under saddle, not just when I'm officially "schooling." In the arena with this horse, I shun the exercises that squelch forwardness, such as one-rein stops and deep lateral work. Instead, I focus on bright upward transitions, looking for crisp response in every instance. Like my sister, I've been unconventional with the last step of my dressage test preparation. After the bell rings, Chance and I do a spirited hand-gallop around the perimeter, easing to a trot right before entering the arena. Dare to be different. Do what works.

Dull to the rein. Does the horse plow right through your polite requests to slow? Jig through them? Then the exercises for the rushing horse or fretful horse might apply. Does the horse evade rein action by raising his head or bulging his jaw or simply pulling away to the side? Then the exercises for the above-the-bit horse or stiff-through-the-jaw horse might apply. Experiment and come up with a strategy that gets best results for you.

Aggressive or fearful to other horses. I've lumped aggressive and fearful together, because often the horse that pins his ears and makes faces seems to be saying, "I'm really worried about you, so get away from me." I can distract him from his worries with a bit of shoulder fore, shoulder in, soft feel, driving him quickly forward, or circling away from the other horse-- anything to defuse his anxiety while creating a safe zone. In this case, the clinic exercises provide the distraction, an indirect fix.

As you might have gathered, I don't believe in coddling horses at home until everything is perfect and I can stamp them, "Made." I take the greenies out in public early and often. The showday experience becomes an intrinsic part of their education, not something that happens someday after their educations are allegedly complete. That's why I'm such a big proponent of integrating the clinic exercises seamlessly into the showday experience. Skills that are solid at home can fall apart under the stresses and chaos of the showgrounds. What a great opportunity to field-test your homework and broaden the horse by the exposure. The familiar clinic exercises help the horse find constancy in the unfamiliar environment while producing the same benefits that sold us on these methods in the first place.