

WRITTEN ESPECIALLY FOR:

HORSE BREEDERS AND OWNERS CONFERENCE
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TOPIC # 1 SELECTING THE PERFORMANCE HORSE

1. IDENTIFY THE EVENT THAT YOU WANT THIS ANIMAL TO
SPECIALIZE IN:

All of you in this room probably have an event that you would like to pursue. Think for a minute about the diversities that horses can perform. The categories range from cattle events, pleasure events, jumping, horse racing, western riding, reining, halter, showmanship, speed events, track racing horses, all the way to all around competitions which involve combinations of the above or other events.

The American Quarter Horse Association defines a Supreme Champion as a horse which has earned two official Speed Index Ratings of 90 or above, and has won a total of 40 points in recognized halter and performance classes at five or more shows and under five or more different judges approved by AQHA, AND a minimum of 15 of these points must be earned in halter classes with a minimum of 8 of the points being earned during or after the horse's two year old year. At least two Grand Championships with five or more horses in the sex division, must have been earned under two different judges, with at least one of them being earned on or after the horse's two year old year.

AND at least 20 of those points must have been won in performance events at AQHA approved shows or in races with at least 8 of the 20 performance points earned in one or more of the following events:

Reining	Jumping
Working Cow Horse	Green Working Hunter
Western Pleasure	Working Hunter
Western Riding	Hunter Hack
Hunter Under Saddle	

AND with at least 8 of the 20 performance points earned in one or more of the following events:

Calf Roping Dally Team Roping-Heading or Healing or Cutting

I want you to picture in your mind exactly what you would want a horse to perform. The description of the Supreme Champion gives us an insight on what kind of animal we would need to select if that were what we wanted to win. You would need a horse that was correct enough in conformation to win in halter classes, a horse that could run fast enough for a AAA rating, and perform in at least two performance classes--one of them being cattle events.

What are you looking for? This is the first decision that you will make. Decide what you want in a horse and what you want to train him to do. Now we have a target. Everything else should be aimed at this target. Over the years, one of the hardest part of being a trainer is having a horse brought to me that the owner wanted to perform in an event that he was physically not capable of being great in because of his conformation. To select a horse that will stay sound and perform for years is to select one that is bred to do the job, built to do the job, trained to do the job, and has the mind to do the job. This is the ultimate. Lets go through some basic guidelines.

2. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO SHOW THIS HORSE?

Futurities are paying big money. This has changed the horse industry a great deal in the past 15 years. It is no longer feasible to take a horse that works several events and expect him to win at a top futurity in a specialized event at 3 or 4 years of age. He will be competing against horses that were bred and trained SPECIFICALLY for that futurity.

It is still feasible to take a horse in several events and be competitive in small round-up club and or state level shows. There are many different levels of competition and many different levels of commitment required to be successful in the different levels. IDENTIFY YOURSELF, AND WHERE YOU WANT TO COMPETE. Observe the level of competition that you will be showing against. You have a target to aim at.

3. IDENTIFY YOUR PRICE RANGE:

You have identified the event or events that you are interested in, and the level of competition where you want to compete. This will probably give you an idea of what you will have to invest to compete at the level you have

identified. Prices can vary a great deal. They can vary from region to region--country to country. If you have time to shop, there are some bargains to be found--if you are in a hurry, or short of time, you may spend more. They will also vary because of age of horses and breeds.

4. IDENTIFY THE BREED OF HORSE THAT YOU WANT

You have already decided where you want to compete on this animal, so this may eliminate certain breeds to you. Obviously if you want to compete in Quarter Horse shows, you will need a registered Quarter Horse. If, however, you want to rope calves, run barrels, endurance ride, compete in rodeos or open play days, etc. you are not limited to specific breeds.

You can study what breeds have won the most in the event you wish to pursue. Do your homework by reading magazines and asking questions. You can find out what type breed makes a great horse often in the event you have chosen. **DO NOT GO OUT AND BUY A HORSE BECAUSE IT HAS A PRETTY COLOR** and expect to mold it in to a great champion when it may not be bred or built to perform what you want it to do.

5 IDENTIFY THE AGE HORSE YOU WANT TO PURCHASE

What year do you want to compete? If you are wanting to get started immediately, you will want to purchase a trained, seasoned animal that is ready to show. You might say that one that is finished will be higher than a prospect, baby, or yearling, etc.

When you buy a baby or a yearling, you should tabulate the costs of getting this horse to the point where the finished horse is. To give you an idea of what it will cost you, here is my last vet bill:

DEWORM ORAL	15.00
RHINO/INFLUENZA	18.00
STRANGLES	9.00
TETNAS	8.00
SHEATH CLEANING	20.00
DENISTRY	40.00
SHOEING	50.00
TRIMMING	20.00

I give Rhino, flu and worm every 60 days on the horses I haul and shoe and trim every 5-6 weeks. Add up the cost of hay, grain, and supplements you feed. Add the costs of bedding and electricity and or stall cleaners, etc. You also have upkeep on your barns and pens, and usually have some vet bills along the way too.

Be aware of what it costs to grow a baby to the age of competition while properly taking care of him.

I sincerely hope that this gives you some basic guidelines to think about.

MY CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A PERFORMANCE HORSE:

This portion is a formula that has allowed me to put points, and/or dollar wins on over 150 head of horses for the past 25 years. Although I have competed in many events, the specialization that futurities brought into the horse industry gave me the opportunity to put most of my efforts into speed events. I personally have horses from babies to finished horses and enjoy every aspect of the business and training others to realize their dreams.

One of the most exciting opportunities came my way this last year. I was asked to take a position on the Think-A-Mite Ranch in Porecatu, Parana in Brazil. Sr. Jaime and Dona Sandra Navarro wanted to establish the first pure bred Quarter Horse barrel racing station in Brazil. Their dream was to breed, raise, train, show, and sell great barrel horses. Futurities are starting up in Brazil, and rodeos and playdays are already very big. Quarter Horse shows are also growing. There are many mixed breeds in Brazil, but they were primarily interested in Quarter Horses.

Sr. Navarro is a very successful sugar cane factory business man and was willing to spend money to make money. He gave me an opportunity to use the formula that had worked for me in the United States. He was willing to ship in horses if necessary. He asked me for a Projectus and a Plan--what I wrote up for him is what I am going to share with you:

A. BREEDING 25-30 years ago, we did not have the information that is available to us now. Records have been kept by many Associations and Stud

Books are available from most breeds. Register of Merits and produce records are very easy accessible to all of us.

Magazines such as the Quarter Horse News, Barrel Racer News, etc. record and report the winnings of individual horses as well as keep track of leading sires and dams for each year and in past years. I personally have a lot of experience in riding different lines of horses and know which are my favorites. The first thing I want to look at is the breeding on an animal.

I want to study the history of production in families. You cannot train speed into a horse. He either has it or he doesn't. I want to know the performance longevity of the family line and the mentality. You cannot see into the mind of a horse, be positive of what his disposition will be, or measure his heart from the outside, but you can get an idea of these things from the blood-lines and the history that is recorded.

(Navarros got me every magazine they could from the past 10 years of performance and racing horses in Brazil and I spent hours pouring over them with an interpreter.) I found that most of my favorite breeds were available right there in Brazil. They have been shipping great race horses to their country for many years--plus the fact that their mares are bred to start foaling July 1 which lets many of our great race stallions stand 1/2 season in the U.S. and 1/2 season in Brazil.

B. CONFORMATION: This is a subject that would require in itself a whole symposium. I will try to simplify my requirements.

1. Balance--I want a horse that is balanced whether he is 14 hands or 16 hands. I had a champion named Man O War Leo who won the Honor Roll in AQHA as well as the first WORLD SHOW and many rodeos. He was barely 14 hands tall. I had a 16 hand horse that won many honors. Both were great--they were 8" apart in size but balanced in their size. When I speak of balance--I mean his parts match. An unbalanced horse for an example could be real heavy in front and light behind--real wide in front and narrow behind--long in the body and short in the neck--long top line and short underline.

Stand back and get a look at the horse from the side. Where does his neck come out of his body--high? -- low? A horse will use his head and neck for reach and balance. So, how much turning reach and balance will a short-

necked horse have? A lot less than a longer necked horse that comes out of his body where it belongs. If his neck comes out high, you will always be having to train around that fault.

Select horses that don't require extra training to compensate for faults. Select horses that do not have to have extra-special vet care and corrective shoeing to perform. You can train around a lot of problems and I've done it for years, but spare yourself the grief. How can we do this? By avoiding weak or undesirable conformation in the animal you select. **REMEMBER THIS: A CHAIN BREAKS AT THE WEAKEST LINK.**

2. Bone--As you are standing on the side of the horse, look at his hock line. Observe the distance from the hock to the ground. (It doesn't matter how fast the horse is if he cannot gather and turn a barrel) Look at the length and angle of his pastern. Look at the length of his canon bone. Look at the top line and the underline. Look at the angles of his shoulder and hip. Look at the size of his foot and how his knees look from the side angle.

Now walk to the back of the horse. Observe the hind legs. Does he turn in or out or stand straight? Walk to the front and observe the front legs and ask yourself the same questions. Look over the head--it will tell you a lot. Is the eye big and kind, or small and piggy. Study how a horse sees and how important it is to his disposition. (Example: A horse that has a small eye and cannot see you coming from behind will often times be a kicker or panic easily)

Next--watch this horse move. A round pen is a good place to get a good idea of how he moves, changes directions, uses his neck, etc. If the horse is broke--ride him FOR SURE!! You can get a feel of his mouth and sides from his back. You may find him to be gorgeous to look at, but stiff in the sides and have no mouth. I want a horse that is supple, quick and powerful--light and responsive. I won't discard a lazy horse (my first WPRA Champion was extremely lazy and laid back)--but I prefer quick and responsive. When I was selecting horses in Brazil, I had opportunities at some of the ranches to ride the stallion, look at the producing mares and ride the coming 2 year olds plus study the records of siblings. Conditions are not always that ideal--so you have to go with what information and opportunities are available to you.

Bone structure does not change. Look for bone that is large enough to support the weight of the horse and stand up under performance. In other words--I won't choose a large horse with tiny bones and feet. This is asking for trouble in the long haul and may I emphasize that I am fanatic about selecting and training horses for the LONG HAUL. I love horses!!! I want those that are going to enjoy their job and bring blessings to all those who own, ride, and love them. I have no tolerance for people who abuse horses in any way. Buying poor prospects is inviting abuse from ignorant people.

You cannot always choose a great prospect--but you can certainly cut down the odds of getting a dink. If I am not sure about something, I am blessed to have a great vet and horse shoer who are personal friends and my advisors. Turn to those around you who are experts in their fields and have specialized and are constantly learning and keeping up with new ideas and meds. Look around you--find those who have had many successes and learn from them. Keep an open mind and LISTEN. You can learn as much as you desire--Do Not Limit Yourself in any way from learning. There are many great books out. (You can even rent them from most libraries)

ON TO TRAINING