

at our fingertips. The short version, however, is that it starts and ends with understanding the horse in order to work together with them. Then: impulsion, rhythm, straightness, contact, suppleness, and collection (order depends on the school being taught).

I left my experience with GHM with a long reading list. I have ordered several of the books he spoke of already.

George Morris is one of the most influential people our sport has ever seen almost the “God Father of Show Jumping”, and yet on nearly every day he was instructing, he would speak the words “I am still learning, I am only just beginning to know.” The passion for training horses and teaching people is infectious. The commitment to excellence in every avenue is remarkable. The humble approach to life as a never-ending exercise in learning and growing is something that will not be soon forgotten.

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# GHM Clinic Exercise

By Alexander Grayton

The courses and exercises that GHM sets for each day of his clinics are invented and developed on the evening prior, based on demonstrating principles of teaching and training, and based on the level of the groups to be instructed. Over the course of the clinic, courses were changed and tweaked each day, as exercises expanded and extrapolated into variations – there were rarely if ever any complete overhauls of the courses in my experience.

One clinic was outside in a large sand ring, complete with a tabletop, bank, and many natural jump options including walls. The availability of course material like this was reflected in the courses set, and the principles taught were borne from the same. The last clinic I assisted GHM for was at Rich Jan/Feb 2017

Fellers Stables in Oregon, which had a strong group of riders from Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. The setting was in a covered arena (open on one side to the elements including wind and rain), with superb footing that allowed for tight turns and complex patterns without risk to horse or rider.

While each day ended up taking on a life of its own, the basic structure was consistent – begin with a discussion of equipment, flatwork theory, training theory, etc; followed by a warm up with some exercises to highlight or expand on theory and a demonstration of more complex flatwork processes

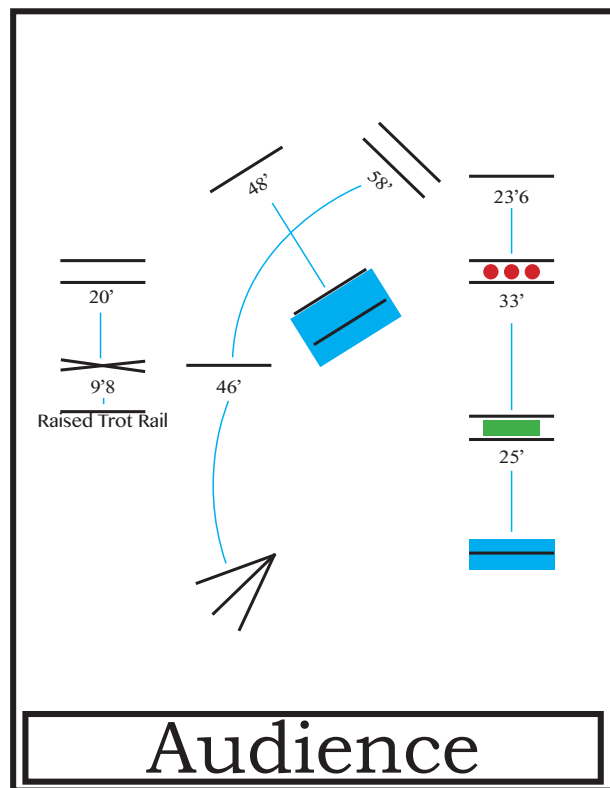
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or techniques from GHM and myself; then right to the first of three jumping exercises set.

The first jumping exercise was a gymnastic, then a pattern of moderate height but technically quite difficult to work on rideability, and finally a complex series of jumps to put everything together executing a well-considered plan.

Here are the details from one of the days at Rich Fellers Stables:



### Gymnastic

A raised trot rail was set 9'8" from a cross-rail, and 20' to an oxer of two plain rails in cups with no ground line or fill. A square pole was placed on a diagonal across the rails of the oxer to add a tricky visual component to draw the horse's eye. Riders were to trot in to the cross-rail and canter in one stride over the oxer, after which a lead change was to be executed into the first corner before riders made a transition to halt in the second corner. The exercise expanded into turning towards the centre of the ring over the oxer in order to make a rollback turn and jump the gymnastic backwards from oxer

to cross-rail to raised pole as a landing rail. Riders were assisted with proper position throughout the exercise in order to maintain a forward seat riding position and an automatic release when possible to keep a connection with the horse.

### S-line


A fan jump (left side had three planes to the jump like a triple bar, right side one plane like a vertical) was set quite short out of a left turn on a fairly acute angle, measuring 46' centre to centre on a right bending line to a skinny plank vertical on the quarter line, and 58' centre to centre on a right bending line to a Swedish oxer facing deep into the opposite corner also on a fairly acute angle. The oxer had a lattice gate on the ground under it as a type of Liverpool arrangement. The line was to be ridden in a 3 stride-to-5 stride to start, as riders had to effectively use the corner of approach to make the desired line from the fan jump to the skinny plank in order to set up a very short outside track 5 stride to a spooky oxer. After perfecting this, riders had to change their track accordingly to make a 3 stride-to-4 stride option. Given how short out of the corner the first jump



came, riders had to have done their homework on the flat in order to be able to turn in early without the horse leaning in, and to be able to shape a line out or guide the line to the inside track. Rideability was the name of the game in no uncertain terms.

### Mini course

On the opposite quarter line of the ring from where the trot-in gymnastic was set, a quadruple combination was set with the following dimensions out of the left corner: brick cut-out wall with three rails set just behind it, 25' to a square white rail oxer with a box in the centre of the rails as a slight false ground line, 33' to a square oxer with three 55-gallon barrels standing vertically centred between the rails, 23'6 to an airy vertical with one plank in the bottom holes on the standards and one plank set to the height of the exercise. Out of the following corner after the quadruple was a blue plank short out of the turn, 48' to a 10' wide water tray filled with water and standards with rails to make a ramped oxer. The back rail of the 'oxer' over the water was centred in the water tray and was set at roughly 1.10m for every group. The pattern to be ridden was to jump the quadruple out of the left turn starting with the brick wall vertical, then short out of the corner to the plank and 3 strides to the water; riders were sometimes asked to transition to halt in the corner after the water before continuing, or otherwise continuing right away with a lengthening of stride down the next long side, and re-shortening of stride in the corner to prepare for the quadruple out of the right turn. The distance in the quadruple again demanded planning and forethought, rideability was tested to be able to continue immediately to the water line, and finally riders had to adjust their plan for the quadruple to jump it backwards as the requirements were different heading the other way.

As should be expected, setting the course was planned and methodical, with each jump carefully measured with a tape. Riders were expected to take part in setting the course to grasp the dimensions of what they were to be asked to jump later. With each group variations were made and new 'teachable moments' arose to highlight areas of focus to the riders in the groups as well as the trainers, riders, and spectators in the stands auditing. 



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