

Hey Neighbor For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Reining Horse Trainer Offers Advice

Balance is the most important part of conformation to consider when selecting a performance horse.

"Some horses are small, and others are big, but they must be balanced," emphasized Brent Wright, Ottawa reining horse trainer.

"The parts must fit together so the horse will move right and hit the ground soft," continued Wright, a clinician at the EquiFest of Kansas in Wichita.

"Hocks should set close to the ground, but not be sickle-hocked. The horse must be straight in the front end, and the chest needs to 'V' up for the horse to move sound," critiqued the trainer. "Neck set into the chest must be such that the horse is naturally low-headed."

A professional trainer for over 30 years, Wright has won the National Reining Horse Association Derby twice. He is a two-time NRHA Futurity reserve champion, a Quarter Horse Congress Futurity champion and reserve champion and a reserve champion in the National Reining Breeders Classic.

Although Wright has had winners with all horses, he commented, "I like geldings; they usually have a more even disposition."

Recognizing that many kinds of bits are available, Wright stressed, "The bridle itself is so unimportant compared to what you are putting it in."

He added, "Nothing complex is needed. I do start some colts in a rawhide

bosal and then go to a ring snaffle. I'll use a twisted wire snaffle sometimes if more pressure is needed. Next, I might use a loose-jawed shank bit. It all depends on the horse."

All horses have a certain extent of resistance, but they will soften some with enough continued effort on the part of the trainer, according to Wright. "When a horse is resisting, some-

times it's essential to take a hold of the horses in order to get him to soften. If a horse is 'laying' on the bit, more time will usually be required to get him to soften.

"It's a mental thing, and you're the boss. I never quit until the horse has softened," the clinician explained.

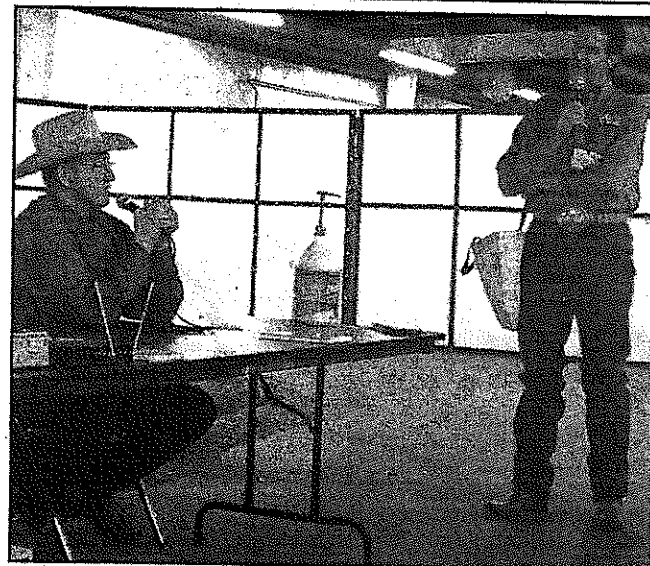
Horses progress in training at different speeds. "It's impossible to know for sure, but with some horses, I can pretty well tell within a couple of days if they have the potential to be a top rein-

"However, I have had some horses that were continually getting better, but they really didn't get everything together for several years," Wright said.

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Futurity purses have inflated the value of reining prospects, but there is a lower market for horses that don't prove to be top end performers. "It's sometimes difficult to find a home for older horses with a certain amount of ability, but not enough to win the big events," Wright related.

There are many variables in determining values of horses. "A beginner level horse, one a person can win with at small shows, might be purchased for \$10,000 to \$15,000," Wright indicated. "However, a horse with the potential to win major non-pro events could be priced in the \$50,000 area."



Brent Wright, Ottawa horse trainer, was interviewed live on the radio program The Horse Show with Rick Lamb. He reviewed what he looks for in a performance horse.

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Early in his training career, Wright would have customers expect him to train their horses in as short a time as 30 days. "That's impossible. I don't get those kind anymore," he recognized. "It takes a minimum of 18 months training to get a horse with the breeding, ability and mind frame ready to compete successfully. Still we don't know what their future will hold. Sometimes, it's just hard to tell."

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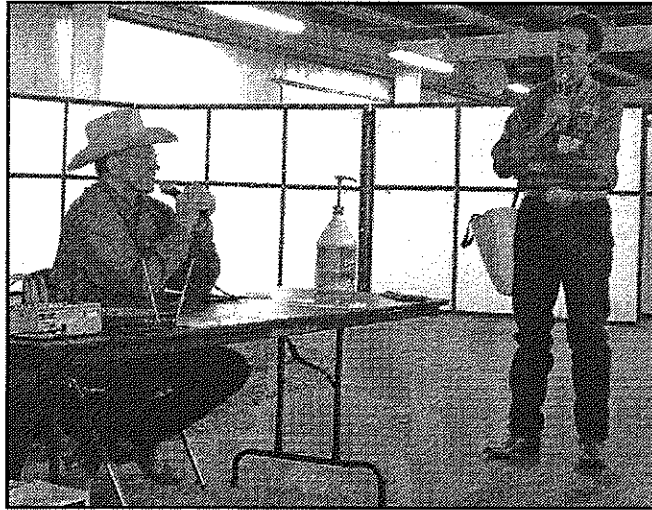
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