



# Kicking off With Confidence

*Developing the skills and knowledge to be  
a more confident competitor*



So, you've decided to compete...

## Let's talk about what that means

*You are paying a show management team, stewards, judges, and asking volunteers for help... And you are signing up to be judged.*

That person is a human...

Who has been trained to objectively compare each competitor to a standard

Who may be a little hangry

Or may not have finished their coffee

Who may have had a really bad horse, of which your horse reminds them

Who may have just seen the best ride of their career



So, you've decided to compete...

Well, when you put it like that...

*It takes a lot of time, money, sacrifice to make it happen, so to avoid disappointment, it's important to clarify why you want to put yourself thru the joy of paying someone to judge you.*



So, you've decided to compete...

***Let's think about the reasons you might want go to a show.***

- To test where you and your horse's skill level is?
- To hang out with your friends?
- To make a name for yourself?
- To campaign a horse for sale?
- Because you love self-punishment?
- To qualify for something?
- To work towards moving up?
- To win? (a \$2 ribbon)



So, you've decided to compete...

*“Courage is knowing it might hurt and doing it anyway. Stupidity is the same. And that’s why life is hard.”*

Same could be said about showing...

So let's avoid the stupid side & come at our showing experience with a plan



# Goals

## Three Types of Goals



Controllable



Mostly  
Controllable



Very  
Variable



## Goals

# Abstract vs. Concrete Outcome Goals

**Concrete** - More measurable. Less controllable. *Examples: qualifying for a certain show; achieving year end awards; finishing on a certain score; winning; placing; staying in the dressage arena; correct striding down lines; clear show jumping;*

**Abstract** - Sometimes more controllable. Sometimes less measurable. *Examples: quieter dressage test; more confident cross country round; more relaxed horse on show grounds.*



# Goals

## SMARTS Goals

- **S**pecific—The goal is clear to YOU.
- **M**easurable—The goal needs to be stated in a precise quantifiable manner, allowing for the reliable evaluation of progress. This could be as simple as keeping notes on progress
- **A**ttainable—Make some goals lofty, but make sure they aren't out of the realm of possibilities..
- **R**elevant—The goal needs to be associated with skills that will add value to the athlete and their performance.
- **T**ime-Bound—Set a completion date for goals with intermediate checkpoints to evaluate progress.
- **S**elf-Determined—These are your goals. Don't let others influence them.



## Goals

# Four Categories to Address in Goal Making

- Rider and horse physical fitness
- Rider and horse mental fitness
- Rules
- Experience level of rider and horse



# Goals

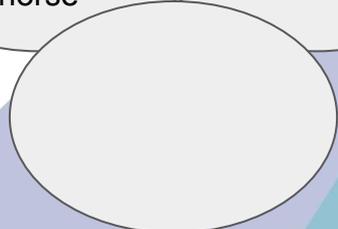
## Concrete Example...

*Qualify for Regionals*

**Develop warm-up strategy that prepares us for a steady, accurate test**

Attend 3 shows as a non-compete horse

Establish a pre-ride routine



**Gain fitness to maintain strength for 6 minute test**

Go to the gym 3 times a week

Add in 2 conditioning rides a week

Establish a diet based on what nutritionist recommends

**Achieve 2 qualifying scores (separate shows, separate judges)**

Establish lesson routine twice a week

Do trot and canter work in dressage ring (4xweek)

Improve free walk/medium walk score to consistent '7'



# Goals

## Abstract Example...

*More confident show jumping round*

**Develop tools that establish mindframe**

Work with a professional once a week

Establish a pre-ride routine

Establish whether supplements are beneficial

**Attend 3 schooling shows at 3 different venues**

Have 3 clear rounds at each height level

Eliminate need to school course beforehand

Select shows that have progressively more atmosphere

**Evaluate horse and rider fitness**

Ride without stirrups for 5 minutes each ride

Ride complete course each week

Ride with short stirrups one times a week



## Goals

# What can you control?

## Controllable

- Preparing for adversity
- Your fitness
- Horse's fitness
- Planning appropriate exposure
- Knowing the rules ahead of time
- Having a good plan of attack

## Not Controllable (mostly)

- Horse throwing a shoe
- The weather
- Flat tires
- Loose horse in warm-up
- Helicopters overhead
- Arena running late
- Show combining classes so now your division is filled with Olympians



# Preparedness

## Do you know?

- How your horse handles traveling (for approximately the amount of time it'll take to get to competitions)?
- How long it takes for your horse to settle in at new places?
- If they tie to the trailer, or stand in the trailer?
- How they handle a new stall?
- How they handle staying in a stall overnight?
- How they are in warm-up?
- How they re-start if there is a hold-up in your start time?



# Preparedness

## How do you know?

- You're lucky and your horse is a seasoned competitor
- Attending shows as a non-compete horse
- Putting your horse in lots of different situations
- Practice your routine at home, adding in different scenarios like a hold in warm-up, and even you going off course



# Preparedness

## Routine

*Nothing is better than knowing what you can control, and feeling successful the execution..*

Pre-ride routine (start practicing before you ever show)

- Listen to specific music, a podcast, or complete silence while you visualize – whatever puts you into a powerful mindset
- Read over ride plan
- Carrot stretches, grooming plan, body massage - something that connects you with your horse to check in how you are both feeling
- Recognize if there are certain things that calm you - certain scents, wearing something that brings good memories, wearing lipstick to highlight your winning smile and distract the judges away from your horse who's turned into a llama



# Preparedness

## Routine

*Nothing is better than knowing what you can control, and feeling successful in the execution.*

Ride Routine (start practicing before you ever show)

- Mounting - tactical use of a treat, either before or after each mount
- Some sort of maneuver to put you and your horse on the same page. Maybe 3 steps of reinback. Maybe a half turn on the haunches.
- Starting with something that can gauge how you both are feeling - hack around the grounds, or just the warm-up rings. Watching a couple of tests or rounds before you start.
- Tailored warm-up to you and horse's strengths and weaknesses - warming up away from the warm-up crazes. Letting your horse have a bit of a stretching canter before being asked to come together. Calmly canter poles while counting strides before ever jumping a jump.



# Preparedness

## Routine

*Nothing is better than knowing what you can control, and feeling successful executing them.*

Show Routine (start practicing before you ever show)

- Addition of supplements not necessary at home (ulcer guard starting 3 days before travel), calming supplements, electrolytes, Quench or other things that encourage water consumption
- Tack changes - different bit for jumping in a show atmosphere - knowing rules beforehand
- RIDE IN YOUR SHOW ATTIRE, RIDE IN YOUR SHOW ATTIRE, RIDE IN YOUR SHOW ATTIRE
- In-barn routine - hand walks, a morning lunge, etc..



# Preparedness

## Fitness

Baseline fitness - ability to perform given necessary tasks safely and successfully (horse and rider)

Differing requirements for:

- Level of competition
- Type of horse (lazy, hot, big mover, etc...)
- Weather (hot, windy, cold, etc)
- Adrenaline (effects horse and rider differently)



# Preparedness

## Importance of horse fitness

- Too physically fit - Unnecessary wear and tear on body; excess energy
- Not physically fit enough - risk injury; not enough stamina
- Adequate mental and physical fitness will help horse handle adverse conditions or unexpected incidents
- Preparing mental fitness is just as important because it is so connected to how a horse responds physically



# Preparedness

## Importance of rider fitness

- Being able to support horse through adverse conditions
- Balancing different types of physical fitness - strength, flexibility, balance
- Mental focus is reliant of physical wellbeing
- Proper fueling (eating) and hydration can have huge impact on day of performance



# Preparedness

## Other mental fitness preparedness

### Mental Preparation

- Practice smiling through the bad moments - smiling helps release cortisol and endorphins that: reduce blood pressure; increase endurance; reduce pain; reduce stress; strengthen the immune system
- Use each ride as an example of calling out positives and identifying how to improve negatives
  - “I stayed in the rings, and if i didn’t stay in the ring, he was really athletic to jump out”



# Preparedness

## Other pre-show tasks

### Attending shows without a horse

- Understanding show grounds layout (if you will be showing at the same facility)
- Helping a friend through show nerves (see, they happen to everyone!)
- Grooming for a trainer to feel comfortable with horse care routine

### Volunteer

- Great way to understand different horse show tasks and logistics
- Ability to watch other riders have bad moments - we have ALL
  - Gone off course
  - Had a really bad warm-up
  - Felt like no one has ever done something as embarrassing as what we just did



# Coming up next week

- Picking the right shows
- Making a schedule
- Entering a show
- Who are the show personnel and how they can help