Stephen Huffman & Southern Motion riding to a 2nd place finish and BC at the 2011 Raptor Run. Southern Motion was the high point endurance horse of the year for the Spanish Mustang Registry.
Still hotter than blue blazes but I can see that summer is winding down. The persimmons are weighing down the limbs, the apples are starting to turn, and most of the swallow chicks have fledged and are now flying and getting stronger for the trip that is ahead. The crepe myrtles are in full bloom and the angel trumpets are ready to bloom soon. These are all things that happen at the end of summer. I’m glad!!

We have had enough rain that the grass is lush and thick again and therefore the horses don’t come to the barn looking for something to eat. If I want to go ride I have to walk out in the field and ask for a volunteer. Most of the time I have a couple that are willing. We’re still not riding hard because of the humidity but trying to keep muscles toned.

This month comes the National Championship ride at Biltmore. I hope all of you who want to compete are ready and your horses are willing and able. If you are not going to compete please consider coming and helping as a volunteer from SERA. SERA is a sponsor for the National Championship and we would like to have a good turnout of helpers. Please contact Cheryl Newman to let her know you are coming to help.

Information is available at [www.aercatbiltmore.com](http://www.aercatbiltmore.com). The National Championship is also sanctioned by SERA!!

Don’t forget the other rides coming up this fall: Leatherwood 75, Virginia Highlands, Big South Fork, Alabama Yellowhammer, Raptor Run, Sandhills Stampede, Skymont, Broxton Bridge, and Blackwater Boogie. Please go support these rides and if you can’t ride, go help! See you down the trail!
A limb will begin to break down from fatigue if it is used repetitively without a break. The horse, trotting on a diagonal uses one pair of diagonal limbs, e.g. the left hind to right fore, to hoist the rider and drive forwards, e.g. the left hind does the lifting (usually with a right handed rider), and, if well developed, most of the driving at the canter.

A weak hind will not do so much driving; rather the right fore pulls the horse along at the trot. This is true for the young horse. The forehand develops strength before the hind and if the hind is not specifically trained for weight-bearing and locomotion, the fore will continue to pull the horse along.

These situations lead to breakdown of the dominant diagonal from repetitive use in both weight lifting and the exertion from push/pulling that weight down the trail.

The hind needs to be "engaged" (i.e. "collected", to support the fore in forward movement especially when the extended (or long trot) is used. When one diagonal is used predominantly the driving hind will succumb to fatigue long before its less used partner.

**Balance**

The horse uses its head to maintain fore and aft balance. When the weight of the rider is shifted over the forehand it causes the head to rise so as not to stumble forward upon locomotion.

If the rider is too far forwards then the horse will stumble and unseat the rider. When mounted, the centre of gravity is raised. This creates a change in weight-bearing dynamics particularly when circling. Sitting back during, movements in extension will add weight to the hindquarters and the horse will lengthen drive forwards. However, with a weak hind, extension will be negligible and the stride may tend to quicken and shorten leaving the back alone to support the rider's weight. Unfortunately, this frame is contrary to the lengthened trotting movement that was posturally asked for.

**Haunches In vs. Collection**

In the descent of hills the horse will find it important to apply the brakes. He can this by swinging the hind around to take little sideways steps or by sitting on his hocks. The latter is ideal whereas former the will compress the internal obliques in the crook of the flank. This shortening will set up the obliques for a spasm and they may stay short and tight, even when the terrain flattens out.
Haunches In - Stresses are shown when this posture is adopted whilst descending a hill.

The following diagram shows how imbalance can affect the horse’s ability:

Rider’s Weight Distribution - causes the horse to bend around the inside leg. Shoulder in.

Note that: the rider’s shoulders are turned to the left to ‘square them up’ but the ribcage has collapsed to the left; the weight is shifted to the left and rear; the hips are twisted such that they point to the right; the left hip is forwards and the right leg is back. This posture signals the horse to balance for a turn to the right. If the horse is urged to travel straight forwards in this configuration then stresses will occur where shown.
The most predominant frame seen in the horses surveyed was a diagonal over-bend to the right. The left hind did most of the hoisting and driving and the right diagonal was prominent at the trot.

Riders who were advised to shift their postures more to the right found that their mounts became equally stressed in the hind and then the stresses moved over to the right side.

This shows that the stress injuries that were set up in the inner hamstring are transient and can relieve themselves during the times that their weight-bearing role is removed.

Some horses showed biting distress from the bent neck and one or two developed inflammation in the neck where the reins rubbed.

Please note: these postures are only held for a short time in Dressage, for fear of creating a chronic over-bend. Repetitious use of this posture will instill a muscle memory and this way of going is thus established as dominant, if not sole method of movement. The opposing diagonal will be weaker and unable to adopt the frame. The strong diagonal will often go lame from over use.
Signs of Stress in the Hind

Here are two examples showing Hind stress

In the

a) Flexor muscles:
  caudal and medial Hamstrings; Gastrocnemius (calf) and the Deep Flexor tendons andé

b) Adductors:
  • the Gracilis.

Cramping closes the joint and leads to spasm and paralysis (in severe cases). This form of stress can cause compensatory stress from weight-bearing in its partner and the diagonal fore.

To train/strengthen the inner muscles of the thigh: learn how to halfpass to the right and left and the sidepass if at all possible.

To prevent this, ensure that the horse and your seat have been trained to adopt both diagonals at the trot and leads of the canter equally well on both sides. This balances the horses and spreads the load more equally. Stamina and Performance will improve.
Side Hill or Gully – Hind, caudal view

Trails are not always flat and horses must decide where best to put their feet on up, down, or cambering tracks. If a horse has to travel in this fashion for a long way, then the adductors that normally bring the legs together will have to learn to stretch longer than normal. If this is the only alternative, (i.e. a side hill or a or a narrow gully), then choose an uphill shoulder in, or a serpentine route. This will help to prevent a spasm in the gracilis muscle from repetitive overuse. The use of both sides of a cambered trail will work out the musculature equally.
In Conclusion

The posture of the rider dictates the posture of the horse. Very often the horse will adopt the same posture as the rider. Riders must begin with level and square hips and shoulders with a straight back. From here it is easy to guide with the seat, knees and leg.

Many horses like to canter up hills and over deep sand. Collection is a good posture for ascent and descent as well as control.
Some of you may have heard of this hardy little horse, but you may not be aware of the incredible ability to do endurance that comes in this historical package. The Spanish Mustang is a direct descendant of the horse that was brought over for the conquest of the Americas. It is a combination of the best Spanish and European breeds for combat, endurance, survival and durability. The Spanish Mustang is not to be confused with the wild BLM mustang. The BLM mustang is a horse that may contain many different breeds that mixed together in the wild, whereas the Spanish Mustang is a pure breed of selected horses that have been carefully collected to preserve what is left of this special horse. Because of their Spanish ancestors (Paso Fino and other European breeds), some of these horses will gait, or do what the American cowboys referred to as the ÒIndian ShuffleÓ. Needless to say, those that would gait were highly sought after by both American Indian and cowboy alike. A horse that made spending long hours on the back of horse more comfortable was worth many hides.

The Cayuse Ranch, located in Wyoming, is owned and operated by the Brislawn family. They are dedicated to preserving the Spanish Mustang as close to the original horse as possible. There are relatively few registered Spanish Mustangs in the world, and few breeders. The impact that the Cayuse Ranch has had on the breed is probably the main reason that we have them for our enjoyment today. Without dedicated breeders and promoters, this hardy horse would vanish.
These horses have all the physical attributes that one may wish for in an endurance mount, and then some. They are compact, much like an Arabian horse. They are extremely good at taking care of themselves, they will eat, drink and most importantly, they have good brains. They do not get bent out of shape over stupid stuff or waste energy fighting you, and they stay calm at the vet checks. Because they are descendents of a traveling and warring horse, they are specialist in survival.

The Spanish Mustang horse has a proven track record in all distances. These sturdy horses can carry people through very tough terrain, and not just carry, but win over other breed competitors. Regardless of their typically small stature, averaging 14.1-2 hands, they are noted for carrying heavyweight riders.

Here are some of the more noted Spanish Mustangs and their endurance accomplishments:

In 2004 Geronimo's Warrior, owned and ridden by Don Funk, and bred on the Cayuse Ranch, WY, won the Jim Jones Stallion award for the 5th year running, and logged his 10,000th mile in AERC competition.
In 1989, Chief Yellow Fox, owned by Kim Kingsley and a descendent of SMR 3 Yellow Fox, one of the foundation sires of the Spanish Mustang Registry and Horse of Americas, competed in AERC and won the Jim Jones Award for the most miles, 1,450 in the 1989 season. The previous year he had gone 800 miles in 17 rides.

In 1989, Chief Half Moon, also owned by the Kim Kingsley came in second with 1,300 miles in 22 rides, while the following year he made 1,250 miles in just 14 rides.

Martha Grisham and Cholla Bay completed many miles between 1988 and 1991. AERC listed them as completing 2,920 miles in 56 rides. That’s almost 1000 miles for three consecutive years.

Stephen Huffman and Dutch Pete SMR 907 completed 2030 AERC miles. Dutch Pete was a Brislawn bred gelding purchased from the Cayuse Ranch. In 1990 the pair finished the 2-day 150 mile Race of Champions in 16th place. The following year, they did the National Championship series of three 100 mile rides, going into the third race ranked 1st in the nation, Dutch Pete was injured by a runaway horse and had to pull. He still finished 7th nationally that year even though he had only the first two races.
Dutch Pete and Stephen Huffman at the 1990 Race of Champions

These days most rides are dominated by Arabians and Arabian crosses. However, there are many breeds of horses that can do endurance and do it well. This sport is a big tent, and there is plenty of room for other competitive breeds in that tent. The next time you see a Spanish Mustang at a ride you may look at them a little differently and with some admiration regarding their roots and what they have accomplished over the years, not only in the founding of our nation, but of their deeds in endurance.

For more information on the Spanish Mustang, please see the registry website.  www.spanishmustang.org

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The Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference was initially called the National Symposium on Horse Trails in Forest Ecosystems, and was held in 1998 at Clemson University. Created by Dr. Gene Wood of Clemson, it was held again under the moniker of SETC in 2000, who coordinated a group of individuals who were in act a review and oversight team. The purpose of the conference is to help us as equestrians keep access to trails by learning to work with the land management agencies, as well as learn ways to minimize our impact on trails and through national lands. The conference is held annually in the Southeast region, with the location rotating throughout those states, including Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the conference in Lexington, KY in July. Next year's conference will be held in South Carolina, but a goal for the future of the conference is to make it a more national event and engage states other than those in the Southeast region, and it will be called the National Equestrian Trails Conference.

There are many aspects of this conference that are beneficial to not only trail advocates, but trail users in general. These aspects include networking, education, inspiration and entertainment!

One of the most important aspects of this conference is the networking a person can do here. Between the lectures and presentations, many opportunities exist to meet the lecturers and other attendees from many different organizations. Representatives from those different organizations come out to this conference and have booths set up with information regarding their organization. Some of these groups include the American Endurance Ride Conference and North American Trail Ride Conference, as well as Back Country Horseman (many different chapters), the United States Forest Service, National Parks Service, Equestrian Land Conservation Resource and commercial operations such as Tractor Supply Company (who has a STEP grant useful for projects, especially those engaging youth). With these representatives lies their wealth of knowledge and experiences working with different trail users.

Inspiration is to be found at this conference--for example, a Kentucky 4-H group leader engaged a few youths in a program designed to discuss trail
issues, safety and education, including Leave No Trace ethics and trail etiquette. Watching the spark these youths had kindled by being engaged in outdoor activities can be quite an emotional experience, and can leave a person with hope for the future. One young lady that had been engaged in last year's conference through a project put together by a Tennessee USFS representative came back to this conference of her own accord and discussed all that she had been involved with due to her initial experience, which was incredible. This young lady had really taken with her the fire of keeping our trails open to us as horse people. Presentations were made regarding some of the unique help that we can give to land management agencies with our stock—we were given slide shows of some of the projects that had been accomplished using pack mules and horses. The benefit and the working relationship that can be made with the management agencies is boundless and seeing the "work in action" is enough to make one want to take a packing course!

Education is another very important attribute of this conference! Trail building discussions and lectures were given, demonstrating the many different techniques that can be used to take a problem area on the trail from disastrous to safe and sustainable. Many lectures with themes of using local resources, grants and people from various backgrounds were held, along with lectures discussing issues at hand, such as water conservation and the USFS planning rule. Knowledge is to be gleaned here from many different sources.

Last, but not least, entertainment can be found here at this conference. We had pre-conference side trips to the Kentucky Horse Park or to the historic Shaker Village. There we had discussions about their trail systems and how they obtained and used their grants and other funding, and how they were able to engage volunteer groups to help build and maintain their over 30 miles of trails—we also got to tour the living history village and discover a nearly forgotten way of life. Equally memorable were the lunch lecture given by the host of Equitrekking and her near run in with a bull elephant in Africa, and the Friday night banquet at the Red Mile in Lexington, KY in a fantastic octagonal barn. Here we got the delight of watching native Tennesseans AERC Hall of Fame Susan Kasemeyer, who did not let her neck brace slow her down one bit, and Leslie Morgan with the USFS clog to Rocky Top (Tennessee). What fun!

I hope this article informs you of the many benefits to attending this conference, and I hope that this article will inspire you to not only attend the conference next year in South Carolina, but also to get involved in the trail advocacy effort. Without our trails, where would we hold our distance riding events?
May 2, 1997 my friend Faith and I hauled together to do the Alabama Heart of Dixie ride at the Bankhead National Forest in Alabama. For any of you who don’t know, that’s where the Raptor Run is now held. May in Alabama was always an adventure. Historically, Bankhead is one of the few places in the nation that has had not one, but TWO F-5 tornadoes pass through it. If you’ll notice, our ride date was just 3 days later than the 2011 epic tornado outbreak which devastated the south and sent another F-5 through Bankhead. In 1997 we didn’t have the weather channel and I didn’t even know they were predicting bad weather.

As we neared the camp we noticed an awful lot of houses seemed to have root cellars in their yards. Interesting! As we pulled into the Owl Creek campground the wind was picking up and we were confused when the ride manager just sprinted past our truck and yelled, Everybody just take cover. We’ll see if we can have an endurance ride in the morning. I quickly set up my PVC corral behind my 2-horse and retreated into the back of my pickup truck with the camper shell. Looking around camp it was obvious the only place to take cover was in the small concrete outhouse in the middle of camp. It was soon prematurely dark and the wind was insane. My friend Faith had declined my offer to stay in the truck with me and had set up her tent. She apologized explaining that she could not sleep with other people; she had a phobia (nothing personal). Pretty soon she was in the truck with me. I think her phobia of drowning overcame the other phobia. I started wondering if it
would be better to leave Kaboot loose in the corral and him end up lost in the forest, or tie him to the trailer and risk the constant lightning hitting it and running out the rope to kill him. I finally decided it would be best to at least know he was dead, so I tied him to the trailer to keep him from blowing away. The lightning was so non-stop it looked like a strobe light. The rain was like a fire hose turned on the top of the truck. Faith, who was new to the sport and really enjoyed our outlaw image sat there with her knees pulled up to her chest, kind of wild eyed smiling and kept saying, “This is soo cool. My friends would just DIE!” She said that now and then for a few hours.

Around 2 AM when the rain hadn't let up and we were hearing trees fall in the woods she kind of snapped and said, “ENOUGH ALREADY. THIS IS ENOUGH!”

Finally, morning came. The next day's newspaper in Huntsville called it “The Night of the Tornadoes.” 7 tornadoes had touched down in that county. When the morning came it was a beautiful day. The sky was incredibly blue and sunny. There was a puddle over a foot deep behind my tailgate. I slept in, got up and fed the horses just happy to be alive.

Now, for the fun part: you know all the activity that goes on the day and week before an endurance ride. We know what HAS to be done, right? The manager has to lay out a trail and mark it. Horses have to register, pay their entry, vet in, get their numbers, and go for the pre-ride. Then you have the ride meeting and get all those warnings and directions. Right? Well, not this time. The manager drove up in camp (he had the sense to spend the night at his home which probably had a tornado shelter) and yelled out his window, “Folks, we're going to try to have a ride on the roads. Trail's flooded but the roads are nice and softened up. If you want to ride, the start is ¼ mile up the
road in an hour. \(\) I had just fed my horse a big meal of grain, but when I saw I had some Easyboots. Faith managed to borrow a second boot from Tina Hicks and we just managed to throw them on, saddle up and ride up the road to see what was going on. At the clearing, there were twenty riders milling around. I asked somebody, "How do we sign up?" They said we'd take care of that after the ride. OK, remember, we had no numbers, no rider cards. They had no list of riders. There was no roll call. The manager had no money from anyone. There were no markers so far as we knew. Ever the conscientious one, I said, "Don't you want a liability release?" That seemed to catch their attention so they passed around a blank sheet of paper and we all wrote out names on it. I remember John Warren laughing as he handed me the paper, "This is how we USED to do it!"

You know what? That ride went off like a charm. The manager put up an arrow at each turn on the road and we had an endurance ride. Turns out a vet can pull you just fine without writing a thing on a card. Names worked fine without numbers, and we all paid up after the ride was in the books. It's great to have rides that are put together like a smooth running machine these days, but Bud Davidson and I know that if worse comes to worse, we can get by with considerably less, because we were there!!!
Keith: Jody, What possessed you to step up and manage a ride?
JB: Not really sure, but maybe some strange insect bit me while I was sleeping at another ride. Like an RM bug bite???, I have a great National Forest in my backyard, and this particular forest has been the site of past endurance rides. They started back in the early 70’s, and ran through about 1998. Then the ride just fell apart, mainly because we didn’t have a campsite that was large enough to accommodate the big rigs of today. I lucked out when Ronnie Alexander walked into my office one day, and I discovered he had a 120 acre farm…right next to the horse trails.

Keith: How is it possible you have a daughter the same age as you?
JB: She just aged quickly and I stopped aging? My “secret” is the use of raptor pee as a wrinkle cream.

Keith: Why did you name your ride “Raptor Run”?
JB: There are places in the Bankhead National Forest that look as if you have stepped back millions of years with the plants and rock formations. Some places (which the ride didn’t get to see) have areas of eroded rock forming ‘culverts’ in the stone that are large enough to ride through with just a slight opening at the top for the limited sunlight to reach through. Misty, mysterious, and other world-like, which possibly harbor creatures such as raptors.

Keith: Do the raptors eat the wild hogs?
JB: The forest service wishes that they do…but alas, to this day, the hog population has still managed to climb in spite of the presence of raptors and
Keith: What were the giant leaves on the ground that were silver on their back side and appeared to be “horse eating” to some of the ponies?

JB: Not sure what the true scientific name is for those, but for years, we (my family) have referred to them as “umbrella trees”. They work very well if caught out in the rain to shed some of the water.

Keith: The trails were immaculate, how did you do that?

JB: Because I am a trail fairy???? No, the Back Country Horsemen in this area worked very hard to clear away about 20 downed trees from tornado and wind damage. They even went out on Friday before the ride to clear one away that had just fell. Other than that, I removed many of the “tripping rocks” and sticks/logs by while (or foot) while jogging and marking the trails.

Keith: This ride featured the largest assortment of horse breeds in all the years that we have been riding AERC rides. How do you account for this?

JB: When I first started doing endurance in 1979, we had a much more varied group of horse breeds represented. So, I decided that I wanted this ride to be “different”. One way was to encourage different breeds to come and do the ride. Many people that are trying to get into the sport think that they must have an Arab or part Arab to compete, which is simply not true. I have seen Quarter Horses, Tennessee Walking Horses, Mustangs, Morgans and Appaloosas beat Arabs over the years. So I promoted my ride as a ride to bring what you own, ride the ride and have a chance of earning a breed award if you finished. As a result, we had Appaloosas, Morgans, Spanish Mustangs, TWH, Missouri Fox Trotter, Quarter Horses, Paso Finos and even
a Warm blood presented at the ride. And most of them finished and placed very well. And maybe I even managed to recruit some new distance riders in the process.

**JB: Connections:** Joseph Baldwin is very close kin to endurance rider Bud Davidson, and he also shoes Bud’s horses. So, I have known Joseph for a pretty good while and had heard him sing several times…and he is VERY good.

**Keith:** Great breed awards, silver plates, how did you afford such great awards?

**JB:** Ah, can’t give away ALL my secrets.

**Keith:** What did you learn and what were you surprised at as being a RM?

**JB:** I learned that I *can* still run…if I have to, for miles without getting tired, although if I had been a rat, I would have gnawed my leg off above the knee. I learned that if you carefully plan ahead, and then surround yourself by the best volunteers, things will work out. I do know of some mistakes I made this first year, and have already made corrections for those for this year. I think I was most surprised by the fact that folks really liked my trails. To me and Joni, we see them all the time and are quite bored with them. I suppose you can take anything for granted if you are always exposed to it…it the beautiful forest.

Keith and his wife Sandy live in Illinois and raise gaited horses for competition. [www.shawneesunrisefarm.net](http://www.shawneesunrisefarm.net)
THANK YOU to our SERA Year end Awards Sponsors

SERA would like to thank the following for their generous sponsorships of our awards:

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Jana Smith - in Memory of Steffanie Waddington - sponsor of the LD Mileage Champion
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Please remember that some SERA awards require nomination by December 15th. For more details, see SERA’s website at: www.seraonline.org
WHY SHOULD I JOIN SERA?

In the Southeast region of the AERC, teamwork is synonymous with SERA. The Southeast Endurance Riders Association was founded when endurance riding in the Southeast was in its infancy. Today endurance riding in the Southeast is only behind the West region in number of opportunities for our members to participate in the sport. In the Southeast there are riding opportunities for riders interested in all aspects of our sport from LD to Multidays. While the opportunities for riders to participate in the historically foundation of endurance -the one-day one hundred mile ride - have declined to an alarming low level in the rest of the country, BUT the Southeast has maintained a steady number of eight over the last 10 years. SERA has been a big factor. SERA promotes endurance riding, supports riders and ride managers. The SERA team is the members that ride the rides and the managers that sanction their rides through SERA. In addition to the horse scales, a speaker system, flood lights and blood analyzer, SERA will have at many rides their projector and screen available to display whatever you want the riders to see pre-ride (trail maps, ride schedule, etc.) and/or post-ride (awards, etc.). If you have pictures (from previous years, or of the ride-site facilities or of significant trail intersections, or photographer), we can put up a slide show during registration and/or the meals, for example. You can email Joe Schoech what you want to display beforehand or put the data on a thumb(zip)-drive at the ride. Documents can even be scanned directly into a display at the ride site. We can also hook the projector up directly to your laptop, if you wish. If you want to show movies, just provide the DVD (no Blu-ray) and we can have a "night at the movies" if you like. We just need a little setup time and then we can make all or any of this happen. Please contact Joe Schoech for the A/V availability.

If you want to be a part of the team that promotes the growth of endurance riding opportunities - you should join SERA. If you want to have the access of resources, scales to monitor your horse's weight and a blood analysis machine to help you understand the metabolic capabilities of your horse so you can better manage your horse you should join SERA. If you want a stable system of quality trails for not only running endurance rides but also for training and just hacking around you should join SERA. SERA's goal is to make endurance riding in the Southeast region the best it can be. If this is what you want you should join SERA.
CLASSIFIEDS

For sale: 2000 Four star 2 horse slant bumper pull trailer. Collapsible rear tack area with optional tack area in large dressing room. Drop down doors on drivers side. Has a sprayed in bed liner with heavy mats over to eliminate floor damage. $8500.00 Call 256-614-0277 in Alabama.

Do you have a junior needing a solid, dependable horse? Check our Rainman Gadaf’s record on the AERC web site. Call 256-614-0277 for more details.

Please be sure to make THIS newsletter YOUR newsletter !!!!

Send in any pictures, articles about upcoming rides, best way to get the word out about your rides guys!!! Stories of rides in the past that are informative and fun. Advertise your items, such as horses, tack, etc. that you have for sale free.

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Outta here till Next time !!!!