

# Riding & Natural Horsemanship Part 5

By Tim Hayes

The methods and tools of Natural Horsemanship used in riding (English or Western) require three primary elements from both human and horse: Physical Harmony, Mutual Understandable Communication and A Cooperative Positive Relationship. Last month we examined communication and discovered the best way to describe the Natural method was to distinguish it from the traditional method.

In this article we'll examine the difference between these two methods: Traditional which uses intimidation to obtain control and Natural which uses domination for control. (For more insight in distinguishing between intimidation and domination read: "Do you dominate or intimidate your horse" in the Articles Section on [www.hayesisforhorses.com](http://www.hayesisforhorses.com).)

## TRADITIONAL

The Traditional method uses intimidation to control the movement of a horse i.e. coerces, scares, threatens or bullies. Physical force is used in increasing degrees with no relief until the horse obeys (I kick'm to go, if he doesn't I kick harder). If the horse resists eventually the force becomes physically painful. As already mentioned although the rider may get the horse to obey his request this method can often result in unwanted negative side effects such as resistance, fear, anger or dullness.

With no relief, once a horse knows he can't escape from his human predator the only way to eliminate the discomfort of the heel, the spur, the bit, the crop or the whip is to give up, submit, and move away from it. Since this seems to momentarily work until he feels the force of the next human request the horse learns the fastest way to get his predator "off his back" is to give to pressure. This is not the most effective way of building a Cooperative Positive Relationship and often shows up in performance problems at the show or on the trail.

## NATURAL

The Natural method (just like horses communicating with other horses on the ground) uses the power of domination through progressive levels of comfort and discomfort. Unlike the Traditional method that uses intimidation to control the horse i.e. coerce, scare, threaten, or bully, controlling by domination creates a natural non-threatening method that leads, governs and directs.

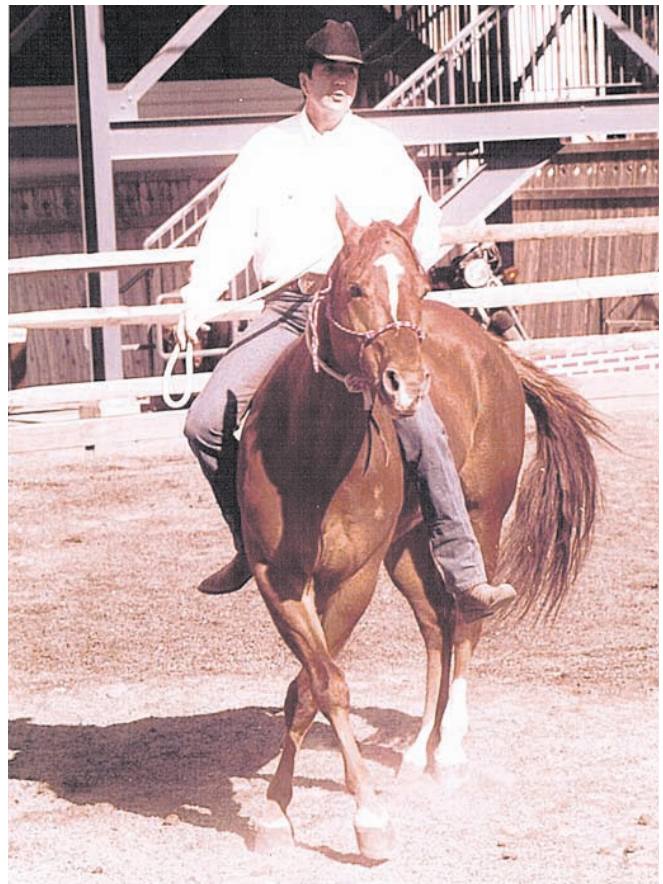
The rider uses his aids - weight, hands and legs - to communicate with levels of discomfort (pressure) to motivate and comfort (the release of pressure) when the horse positively responds. The rider sets it up so the horse gets to choose. Knowing the horse is

motivated by comfort the rider knows if his physical communication (cue) is clear, the horses' choice will also be his (the rider's) choice.

This not only contributes to creating a cooperative positive relationship it allows the horse to maintain his dignity. Neither horse nor human likes to be forced to do something. Many years ago one of my teachers said: "You make the right thing easy, the wrong thing difficult and let the horse decide." Another teacher said: "Pressure motivates but it's the release that teaches."

This method of communication has also been in existence for thousands of years however unlike Traditional methods it has until recently been rarely used in teaching riding. Historically the most important use of riding horses was to help achieve military superiority for the great armies of the world. Riding horses for recreation, as we know it today has only become vastly popular since the introduction of motorized vehicles a little more than a hundred years ago.

In order to form enormous cavalries thousands of horses who had never been ridden by humans needed to be trained to carry thousands of soldiers who had never ridden horses. This needed



Tim practicing Natural Communication on Austin's front end using Natural Riding Techniques: lightness, shifts in body weight and bareback. Chelsea Equestrian Center, 1998.

to be accomplished in the shortest amount of time. The simplistic methods of Traditional Horsemanship (kick'm to go, pull on the bit to stop) could be taught and learned far faster than the more humane methods of Natural Horsemanship. This also allowed more time for important weapons and warfare training of the soldiers.

With the introduction of motorized military vehicles and the end of the cavalry, thousands of horses and riders were left without a purpose. Some army generals, who were highly skilled horseman and had always practiced. Natural principals and methods opened schools and riding academies for those

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make sure you keep his head turned just a little bit towards the inside. What? He keeps turning in? Well, you also need to learn to keep your inside leg on him so that he doesn't turn in. Your horse needs to learn to ride on the outside rein. You need to learn how to keep him going straight when his head is slightly turned. I mean turned in ever so slight. Just so you can see a little bit of his eye. Keep that inside leg on him. This can best be done at a slow sitting trot. Sit up tall, butt tucked, shoulders and chest open, yet not stiff. Try it at the walk first. If that seems to go well, trot, Halt if you feel him start to come in. Ask him to move over with your inside leg only. Head should still be bent towards the inside. Make sure you are sitting up tall and not pulling his head in the direction you want to go.

Keep your inside hand back just a little towards your hip. Do not trot if you can not keep him straight at the walk and do not canter if you can not keep him straight at the trot. If you cantered him before you fully corrected him at the trot, he will be cutting the corners and going where ever he wants not a good thing to be doing with other riders in the ring.

So, start slowly and be patient. One step at a time. The hot weather will be upon us soon and you might just want to just relax and walk. Enjoy and stay cool.

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hunter! And already this season they have shown at First Level in Connecticut against "the big boys" and more than held their own.

But dressage is not Beau's only milieu, before hunting all winter he competes in the Hampton Classic with Helen's daughter-in-law. They were high up in the ribbons in Adult Equitation last year- no easy feat. Trail riding is old hat for him. Anyone is safe aboard this sweet heart. Two of Helen's 50-year-young friends are learning how to ride aboard this patient citizen. Anyone and everyone are not only safe on him, but also learns from him.

Beau lives on Helen's family farm in Eastport with lots of grandchildren and ponies...sounds like heaven! With lots of besotted young people around to lavish love and attention on him you would be expect Beau to be very, very spoiled. And you would be very, very right. But it's synergistic relationship, the more treats and adoration the family gives to him, the more love and devotion he gives back. In other words, they make each other stronger than they would be apart.

Oh, and that fanciful name? Look very closely at Beau's face. There you shall see a perfect silhouette of...you guessed it... Dr. Suess' *The Cat in the Hat*.

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students of means that could afford a higher level of equine education. But the vast majority of former cavalry soldiers taught or past on what they had been taught: Traditional Horsemanship.

By taking the time to become better horseman many of our 20th Century "Natural Horsemanship" Clinicians discovered, read, and past on the principals, methods and tools contained in the books of these former cavalry generals. Today we are fortunate to have many different teachers to chose from.

I too wanted to be better and know more than I saw offered with Traditional Horsemanship. I have been extremely fortunate to have personally studied with many of these masters. Though they all have their own style and personality everything they teach is based on the same 3 ingredients: Physical Harmony, Mutual Understandable Communication and A Cooperative Positive Relationship. Yes learning to ride using natural methods takes more time but so does anything of quality and value.

Next month we will examine the last of the 3 elements that make up the methods and tools of Natural Horsemanship used in riding (English or Western): A Cooperative Positive Relationship.

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for year-end finals, while at the same time our riders who are just starting out can experience a high-level show with great footing!"

**SPEAKING OF FOOTING!**

Footing similar to the well-received material that was used during HITS' winter circuits in Ocala and Thermal highlight this season's list of facility enhancements at HITS-on-the-Hudson. In addition, HITS has just completed installing more than 33,000 feet (over six miles) of drainage in many of the rings.

Another significant upgrade for this season is new temporary stabling. HITS will be debuting 800 portable stalls and seven new tents which, combined with gold and silver permanent stabling, gives Saugerties a total of 2,000 available stalls. The new temporary stalls are constructed of wood and steel dividers and are similar to structures used in permanent stabling.

Exhibitors will also enjoy new jumps from Olaf Petersen, which debuted at HITS Ocala this past winter. In addition, HITS Ocala's course decorator, Flora Baptiston, will bring her majestic decorating abilities to the rings at HITS Saugerties, making the courses more elegant.

When the spring series of horse shows is complete, HITS Saugerties then takes a short hiatus before returning on July 23 for three more weeks of world-class show jumping. During the summer series of shows, HITS Saugerties will once again host the USEF Junior Hunter National Championships for the East Coast, August 4 - 6. In addition, on Thursday, August 7 HITS will premiere two new events, the \$5,000 Pony Commotion Hunter Classic and the \$10,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby.

HITS, Inc. is a special events management company primarily focused on producing hunter/jumper horse shows. Based in upstate New York in the village of Saugerties, HITS produced its first horse show circuit in Gainesville, Florida in 1982. Since that time, HITS has grown into a nationwide company with world-class hunter/jumper circuits in California, Florida, Arizona, New York and Virginia.

For more information and a complete schedule of classes and events, visit [www.HitsShows.com](http://www.HitsShows.com).

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***2008 HITS Saugerties Dates***

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON I - May 28 - June 1

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON II - June 4-8

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON III  
June 11-15

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON IV  
July 23-27

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON V  
July 30 - August 3

USEF JUNIOR HUNTER NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONSHIPS - EAST COAST  
August 4-6

NY HORSE & PONY SHOW(VI)  
August 6-10

HITS-ON-THE-HUDSON VII  
September 3-7

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