

TRAINING TIPS

COURSE DESIGNING (PART 1)

By Khaled Assem



A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO I ATTENDED AN FEI WORKSHOP ON COURSE DESIGNING WITH VETERAN FEI SHOW JUMPING JUDGE AND COURSE DIRECTOR ROGIER VAN IERSEL WHO IMPRESSED EVERYONE WITH HIS CALM APPROACH AND GREAT SKILL IN THE FIELD. IN THIS FIRST PART OF LEARNING ABOUT COURSE DESIGNING, I WILL ATTEMPT TO REFLECT ON SOME OF THE KEY ELEMENTS PRESENTED.

The genius of course designing, especially on the national level, is that a designer really can influence a whole generation of horses and riders as they train at home and go to the shows trying out all of their learned skills through balance, pace, related distances and much more. Tests of all of these skills are well planned technically by course designers. That is, after all, their goal.

WHAT A GOOD COURSE DESIGNER NEEDS:

- Feeling
- Creativity
- Competence
- Imagination
- Luck!

THE EIGHT COMMANDMENTS - A COURSE DESIGNER SHALL NOT:

- Design excessively difficult courses
- Defend an unfair course
- Take a stand point that "riders should learn better first"
- Build unstable or potentially unsafe obstacles
- Display a course plan too late
- Use unfair distances
- Ignore bad footing
- Erect obstacles with sharp edges

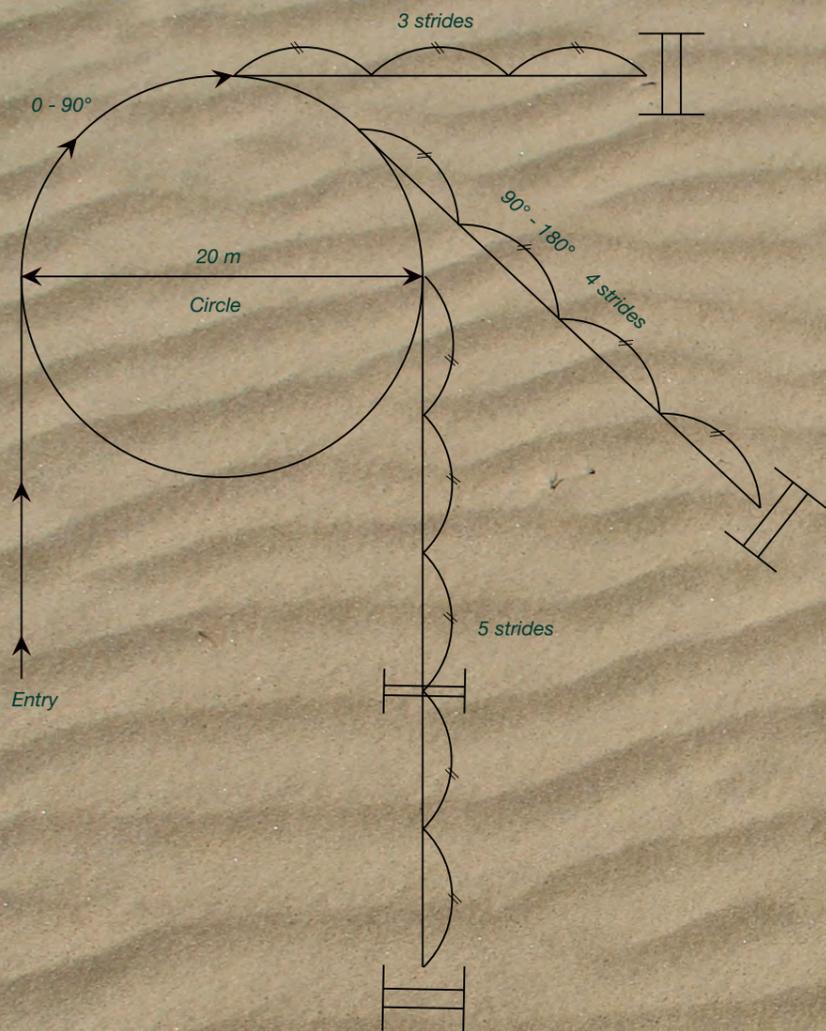
THEORY OF COURSE DESIGNING:

The theory of course designing lies in the ability to give horses good balance to perform better with a rider on. Once the balance is established, we may start a young horse as a jumper.

A horse will correctly jump an obstacle with optimal use of all its limbs only if he maintains his balance. Accordingly, this required balance is developed by the course designer through the awareness of following basic principles:

1. The horse's balance is adversely affected in the lines and turns in the course, as well as the approach to the obstacle and riding away from the obstacle.





2. A minimum of a 20-meter circle to the fence is required for a rider to maintain his rhythm and speed and, consequently, balance.

Once the designer has established the above two points, he is left with the positioning of the obstacle which determines once again the balance of the horse.

Then the designer takes into consideration the minimum number of strides, leaving the turn to the take-off point between:

- 0 – 90 degrees (minimum of three canter strides).
- 90 – 180 degrees (minimum of four canter strides).
- Above 180 degrees (minimum of five canter strides).

With these technically intricate analyses, a bit science and a bit art, the designer hopes to achieve a challenging, interesting, and safe learning experience for the show jumping horse and rider.

About the author:

Eng. Khaled Assem is a certified Level 2 FEI trainer. He has been training for over 15 years, competing internationally for 10 years and locally for 25 years.

