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# GET 'EM BROKE!

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## COW SIDE LEG!

*If you've been to a cow horse show, you've heard this. Here's what it means.*

**Shaun McBride**

**Position** is everything in riding a horse on cattle. Whether you're riding a reined cow horse or a cutter, proper position is what gives you control of that cow. And once you get out of position, it's extremely difficult to get back into position. Reading your cow properly and keeping your horse from leaning on the cow will help you stay in position.

Basic cow control rules:

1. If you are at the cow's hip, you will drive him forward.
2. If you step to the cow's head, he will stop and turn.
3. NEVER anticipate that the cow will stop. ALWAYS drive to the head and don't stop until the cow has stopped and started to turn.
4. Not all cows obey these rules. Some will run you over. Some won't run at all.

Every cow has a bubble. The bubble is that particular cow's sphere of influence. If you start pushing on the bubble, you'll move the cow. The harder you push, the faster he will go. It's important when approaching a cow to go slow, so you can get a feel for how big or small that cow's bubble is. Some cows have a huge bubble; you can be 50 feet away and they will be head high, flip up their tail and run. Others, you have to literally push them forward with your horse's body. The boxing portion of your run is a great place to learn how big your cow's bubble is. This is important in determining how you are going to handle the rest of your run. We'll get into more of this in the next issue.

To drive your cow down the fence, you need to be at his hip. You can be at the cow's hip 1 foot away from the cow, or 15 feet away, to control the speed

of the cow. Remember, the more pressure the cow feels, the faster he goes. Think of the cow as toothpaste and the wall as the tube. The harder you push on that wall, the faster that toothpaste is coming out. You could go down the fence controlling your cow's speed by being laterally at his hip, but at a distance sufficient to keep him from bolting. This works, but galloping 20 feet off the rail parallel to the cow is not exactly what we dream of as an ideal fence run. This is where the cow side leg comes in. If your horse is leaning on the cow (has his shoulder pushing the cow into the wall) you are going to be making that cow very uncomfortable and he's going to start looking for a way out, fast. If you use your cow side leg, you can create a "pocket" for your cow.



**This rider is in great position to drive the cow down the fence.**

This will release some of the pressure on the bubble, and allowing you to get laterally closer to the cow without exerting excessive pressure.

This pocket is also helpful when you go to turn your cow. You ask your horse for more speed, step in front of the cow, stop and rollback and the cow should be right there. If you're not using your cow side leg and your horse is leaning on that cow, I can almost guarantee that when you step in from of that cow, he's going to stop, drop his shoulder to the

inside of the arena and shoot out straight behind you. Then you have a big problem. You are out of position. The worst thing you can do is to chase after that cow, but that's exactly what your mind will be telling you to do. And once you get directly behind that cow and he can't see you – big trouble. He just hears hooves pounding closer and closer like a bad horror movie. He's going to run faster and more frantic and you're never going to get back in position and back in control. This is why I school position, position, position. Once you are out of position, you are just chasing the cow.

For a horse that's used to loping circles and bending in, it might be a little difficult for him to understand why he'd be galloping down the rail and you're asking him to bend toward the rail. You should practice this skill before hand, so your horse understands that he needs to bend whichever direction you want him to, regardless to his position in the pen or which lead he has. Start at the walk or trot, just going around the pen. Add your left leg and ask your horse to bend around it and tip his nose to the left just a little. The last thing you want to do is over tip his nose. This will throw his entire body out of alignment (throwing out his ribcage and hip). Continue to work on him bending around your left leg several times before moving on to the right. A lot of people make the mistake of drilling an exercise to the left, then right, then left again. Your horse will grasp the concept a lot faster if you let him start to get it on one side before moving on to



**Here the rider has stopped the cow and is rolling back – he should end up in perfect position to drive the cow back down the fence, right at the cow's hip.**



**Now the horse is out of position, well behind the cow. The rider is going to have great difficulty getting back into position.**

the other side. As with any exercise, make sure you give him mental breaks, like going back to something he is skilled at executing, if he starts to get frustrated. Then go back to the exercise again. Make certain you always quit on a positive performance.

Until next time – Ride Well!

## NEWS

**COME OUT AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR COW HORSE EVENTS IN OHIO!!** DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, THERE WILL BE AN OPEN COW HORSE SHOW IN FINDLAY, OH. A SHOW BILL IS ATTACHED.

**COW HORSE TRADING Co.**, A TACK STORE FEATURING QUALITY WORK TACK AND EQUIPMENT. THE LINK IS NOW LIVE! VISIT THE STORE FROM [WWW.COWHORSEOHIO.COM](http://WWW.COWHORSEOHIO.COM). WE WILL ALSO BE SELLING HIGH QUALITY USED SADDLES. IF YOU HAVE A SADDLE YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONSIGN, CALL CARRIE AT 614-519-2809.

**CLINICS AND LESSONS** WILL BE OFFERED THIS WINTER IN PATASKALA, OHIO IN ADDITION TO OUR MOUNT STERLING FARM. DETAILS WILL BE POSTED ON THE WEBSITE SOON.

# Your Training Tip of the Month is here!

Be sure to let me know if there is a topic you would like me to cover in future Tips or if you have a training question.

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## Regional Show Calendar

Dec 1-2      Madison, IN  
NRCHA, AQHA Working Cow  
Horse, Cutting & Ranch Sorting

Dec 15      Findlay, OH  
Open Cow Horse Show

McBride Performance Horses  
10698 Baldwin Road  
Mount Sterling, OH 43143

POSTAGE

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**The University of Findlay Winter Cow Horse Classic**  
Located at  
**The University of Findlay Western Equestrian Center**  
Findlay, Ohio

**Saturday December 15, 2007**

**Classes start @10:00 a.m**

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|------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Open Cutting/Herd Work                      | EF: \$20 CC: \$15 |
| 2. Non Pro Cutting/Herd Work                   | EF: \$20 CC: \$15 |
| 3. Beginner Herd Work                          | EF: \$15 CC: \$10 |
| 4. Open Reining                                | EF: \$15          |
| 5. Non Pro Reining                             | EF: \$15          |
| 6. Green Rider Reining (2 handed)              | EF:\$15           |
| 7. All Age Cow Horse                           | EF: \$30 CC: \$15 |
| 8. Non Pro Cow Horse                           | EF: \$20 CC: \$15 |
| 9. Green Rider Cow Horse (boxing only one end) | EF:\$15 CC: \$10  |
| 10. Open 2 Rein Cow Horse                      | EF: \$20 CC: \$10 |
| 11. Green Rider Cow Horse (boxing both ends)   | EF: \$15 CC: \$10 |
| 12. Open Ranch Sorting                         | EF: \$20 per team |
| 13. Non Pro Ranch Sorting                      | EF: \$20 per team |

**\*\*\*Payback 50% of entry fee\*\*\***

- 🌿 Stalls \$15 ea. & Camping available
- 🌿 Stall information: Lisa at 419-434-4656
- 🌿 Class information: Steve Brown 419-434-6664 or sbrown@findlay.edu
- 🌿 Food available on grounds!

**\*\* All Classes are non approved \*\***



The University of Findlay would like to wish you a joyful holiday season!