

What's In Your Ring? With Liza Boyd

BY KIERAN PAULSEN
PHOTO BY TORI REPOLE

Liza Boyd is now a three-time winner of the \$10,000 World Championship Hunter Rider Professional Finals, hosted at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, Sept. 28-Oct. 7. Boyd's program at Finally Farm in Camden, South Carolina, serves horses from hunter, jumper and equitation backgrounds, and she shared one of her favorite low-impact exercises that can be useful for horses of all three disciplines.

The exercise starts with a good warm-up on the flat, then a warm-up over a line of poles on the ground. Once the horse is ready, trot a straight line of raised cavaletti—between three and six efforts, spaced about 3' apart, depending on your horse's stride.

The first phase of the exercise is a single jump. Set the jump near the end of the arena and practice going over it a few times off both canter leads. Focus on straightness, cadence and balance, and don't worry about which lead the horse lands on. Boyd encourages simple changes after the fence if needed.

The second phase incorporates the first bounce, set at an angle and between 9' and 12' in front of the straight jump (depending on the horse's stride). Add the third fence, set 9' to 12' behind the first jump, once the horse is comfortable, then complete the exercise with all three fences and continue the track on a full circle. Switch leads for a balanced workout, and track to the inside or outside of the standards for a tighter or longer stride.

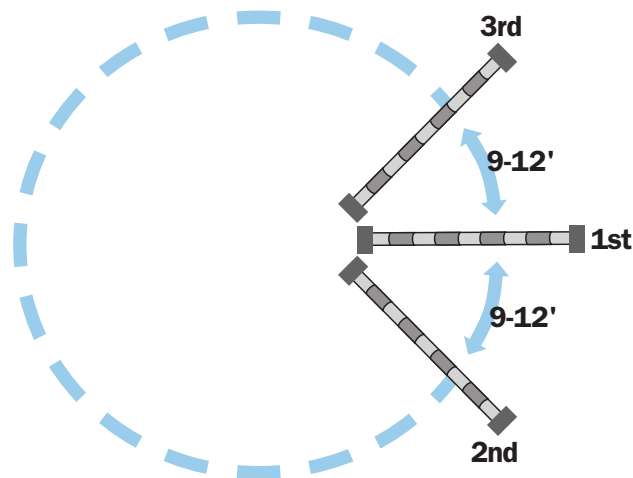
"It doesn't have to be big, so you keep the jump muscles working and keep fitness on the horse without pounding them over huge obstacles," Boyd said. "You're keeping them supple because you come off of both leads, but you're not forcing it. It works on strength because it's on a little bit of a half circle, and that teaches them to turn and bend their bodies. It also works on rideability by making sure the horse is engaged and connected."

The exercise also tests a rider's balance, and Boyd said it's an opportunity to work on things like proper hip angle or an automatic release.

"When we did the USHJA Jumping Seat Medal at Capital



Liza Boyd uses this bounce exercise for hunters (like O'Ryan, pictured), jumpers and equitation horses.



Challenge with one of our riders, all of this stuff really helped them in the gymnastics phase because there was lots of trotting over raised poles and bounces," Boyd said. "And the WCHR Pro Finals [handy round] had a bounce that was logs with no standards, but I wasn't worried about my horse looking at that because we'd done stuff like it at home." 🐾