

# HOW TO *PRESENT* *FOR HORSE* *INSPECTIONS* AT CLASSIC THREE-DAY EVENTS

BY COURTNEY YOUNG

*Presenting yourself and your horse appropriately at a Novice or Training Three-Day jog is just as important as for the horse inspections at major international events. Turn-out professional Courtney Young got the scoop from star riders and amateur long-format enthusiasts alike on how to make the best impression on the Ground Jury at a Smartpak Equine USEA Classic Series competition.*

**T**hree-day event preparedness is no small feat. Conditioning is likely at the top of your list, not to mention the logistics of qualifying and getting

to the event itself with a happy, sound horse. The sneaking fear of learning your dressage test only to turn the wrong way after you trot down the centerline is something for which you find you are in good company. And what with cleaning tack and then waving your magic grooming wand to turn your horse from a furry love-muffin into a gleaming specimen of event horse, you have already got your hands full. Yet, in order to put your best foot forward, you are going to have to present your horse to the Ground Jury, and that means you will be presenting yourself as well.

Hope Nicyper-Meryman and Optical Illusion jogging up for the Preliminary Three-Day Event at the 2011 Virginia Horse Trials. LESLIE MINTZ/USEA PHOTO

## COMPLEMENTING YOUR HORSE AND GOOD FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Lynn Symansky, winner of the Zeppa International Trophy for best turned out at Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event this year, notes that her horse, Donner, “is a stunning classic Thoroughbred, and he’s a brown paper bag. I wanted something that was simple but also stood out. I found colors that complemented him without being too busy.”

That is a balancing act she pulled off impeccably at the Sunday jogs prior to show jumping with the coral and navy color palette and preppy stripes. Complementing your horse, whether he is a “brown paper bag” or something with lots of flash and chrome, is a common thread among riders.

Twenty-five-year-old Lara Chance, won best turned out at the 2011 Waredaca Training Three-Day Event, where she and her horse Lady in Red ultimately finished fifth. “I always try to match my outfit to the color of my horse. My mare was a little chestnut with white legs—I didn’t want to be too bright or colorful so I wore a dark green and dark grey dress. It was plain but brought out her coloring. What you wear should complement your horse and add to them. That’s what you’re there for.”

It is not just about showing off your horse to their best advantage. It is also about standing out from the crowd. That is where the balancing act comes in. Boyd Martin, best dressed male and winner of a new pair of Dubarry boots at Rolex this year, reflects (not without some cheek), “I really do think it’s important to be memorable in the jog up turnout. So if you’re feeling bold, always go for something that stands out from the rest of your competitors. Maybe when you do that, find a picture of Ralph Hill [wearing] orange socks or an American flag suit. Will Faudree is always wearing purple pants or something like that.”

Despite his humor, however, Boyd knows the importance of making a

good first impression on the Ground Jury at the jog. “It’s always important that the first impression is a good one when you meet the judges because the next day they’ll be scoring you in dressage. You want an impressive look—avoid wearing sneakers with holes in them and jeans with tears in them! It’s hard to imagine an elegant dressage performance the following day [after that].” Throwing in a personal connection he recommends, “At some of those three-day events there’s an international judge, so as you present your horse, a ‘bonjour’ or ‘guten morgen’ can earn an extra mark the following day.”

Don’t forget to add a winning smile to your respectful greeting of the Ground Jury. “It starts you out on the right foot,” Lynn says. “If you have something that stands out and complements your horse I think they take in the whole picture.”

As the riders above have noted, and as is so commonly discussed, what you are really at the jogs to do is to show off your horse. This starts not just hours or days before the jog itself but, as Lynn notes, far in advance. “Your horse should be the appropriate weight and the coat [should be] shiny through horse management.” That highlights not only your horse’s nutrition but also your conditioning work.

As an expert on horse management with grey horses thanks to her Advanced horse No It Tissant, Lynn also offers excellent grey-horse-tips: “If you have a grey horse, bathing them every day a few days in advance makes a big difference. It gets the yellow out of the tail, hocks, and knees. I do a regular bath and then use Blu-Kote. Put in a few drops in a bucket and then dunk the tail in the bucket. Be careful not to put in too much or it will turn the tail purple!”

Lynn also offers some nuanced ideas about clipping: “In terms of clipping, make sure their coat looks appropriate. I would not advise clipping a day or two before the jogs as they can get a knick that can turn into cellulitis. Clip about a week out. Also

## PRODUCT TIPS:

- **Blu-Kote:** If you are trying to make your grey horse shine (and get rid of those yellow stains once and for all), Lynn recommends using a few drops in a bucket of water and dunking the tail in after it has been washed. Be sure not to use too much, however, or you’ll end up with a purple tail. Go for the brilliant silver sheen instead.
- **Fiebling’s Hoof Polish:** Lara Chance points out that hoof polish is extremely important and one of the last things you do before you go down the jog strip. She relies on Fiebling’s for the best shine.
- **Andis AGC Super 2 Speed Clipper:** Keep your horse’s bridle path, ears, and muzzle clipped, neat, and tidy with Lynn’s favorite clipper.

To see a list of Beginner Novice, Novice, Training, and Preliminary level Three-Day Events and for more information on the Smartpak Equine USEA Classic Series, visit [www.useventing.com/programs/classic](http://www.useventing.com/programs/classic).





In addition to a shiny, healthy, well-groomed horse, a meticulously braided mane (LEFT, HANNAH BENNETT PHOTO) and quarter marks (RIGHT, LESLIE THRELKELD PHOTO) go a long way in adding that extra sparkle to your turnout.

look at what the weather is going to be. If you have a horse that is tight in cold weather you might want to keep their coat, unless they're shaggy. Conversely, if they get hot in warm weather perhaps clip about a week out so they're more comfortable for the three-day."

## TURNING OUT A JOG-READY HORSE

After you have mastered the perfect balance of complementing your horse with your own turnout and making a positive impression on the Ground Jury, it is time to turn our attention to what is, after all, our main focus—your horse.

Lara lets us in on some of her tips and secrets: "The biggest trick that I've learned is that I use a lot of Vetrolin Shine to make their tails look shiny... I use baby oil on their nose, ears, and also on the reins by the bit. I wipe them off

with fly spray and a sheepskin mitt to get all the dust off and that gives them an extra sheen. I will put baby powder on my horse's legs if they're white to make them look whiter." Additionally, if the horse has any knicks or scars on its legs, try to make them less visible if at all possible using a non-toxic white, black, or brown colored spray. "Just be careful because it does stain and it is really hard to get it off!"

You might think you are almost done once you have your outfit picked out and your horse looking shiny and blemish-free, but there are still details to attend to in order to make the best presentation at a three-day.

"A good braiding job goes a very long way," according to Lynn. "I had Max Corcoran braid for me at [Rolex] Kentucky, who is a master braider. Practice that skill—it's like an updo trial before a wedding."

Be mindful also that different horses look nicer with different types of braids. “The number of braids you put on your horse should depend on its build,” Lara points out. “If you have a big horse, having fifty small braids won’t look as good. My horse was little and lean so she had about 25 small braids. It’s important to braid the whole mane all the way down.”

As you work out jog preparation for yourself and your horse, consider also specific choices related to tack and additional flair. Should your bridle be black or brown? What kind of cavesson should or could be used? Lynn tackles these questions directly: “People jog in flash or figure eight nosebands, but I like the classic, plain cavesson. You can get cheap cavessons and put them on for the jog with a plain snaffle. No rubber bits for the jog. I ride [Donner] in a Happy Mouth for dressage but use a plain snaffle for jog. I also think about color of tack: brown or black.”

When it comes to quarter marks there are two main camps: for and against. But it seems most everyone is in agreement that some horses look great with unique brush patterns on their hindquarters, but if they cannot be done right they should not be done at all. “You should only do [quarter marks] if you can do them well, and they have to be even on both sides,” Lara says.

Boyd puts himself in the “pro” camp of quarter marks. “Don’t be shy to use a bit of flair with fancy quarter marks or sparkly spray in mane and forelock. You want them extremely well-groomed and looking their best to let the judges and competitors know that you’re there and you mean business.”

### 3, 2, 1... JOG

In the moments before you jog your horse down the strip you have handled all the preparations and weighed the heavy philosophical questions about quarter marks, but there are a few last minute preparations still to consider. Lara acknowledges that it is ideal to be “ready early so it doesn’t seem so


stressful right at the last minute. Have everything set out early for clothes, products, etc.” Once Lara is ready she puts everything in a backpack that she takes with her to the jog. “Hands free!”

It is also ideal to have someone with you to help you get ready. “I would have a helper with you that either is walking your horse for you so you can stay clean or can do the final touch up before you jog,” Lynn says. She also recommends that they have a grooming bag with supplies including Showsheen, a tail brush, fly spray, shine spray, rag, et cetera.

Boyd also reminds us that, “when you’re at the trot-up it can be a little bit of a wait. If you have a helper they can always have a bit of shine spray to give the last polish to your horse. Be sure to get your wife or mom to sweep off any dandruff that may have fallen on your coat or any horse slobber on a coat pocket as that can be a rough start to your introduction to the judges.”

After spending all that time getting rid of dirt, don’t attract more by slathering on wet hoof polish before approaching the judges. After Donner is clean and ready, Lynn applies hoof polish to his twinkle toes and then wipes it off to avoid dirt clinging to the goo.

Finally, be sure to think through, once again, the weather and your horse’s comfort. As Lynn points out, “In terms of weather you want the horse to be as warm as possible when you are jogging. So if it’s cool at all, have a nice-looking cooler on that’s clean. I keep it on until a few horses out and pull it right before I go.”

There is a lot to consider for what amounts to a few moments down a jog lane with your horse. Lara puts the focus, ultimately, exactly where it should be: “Relax and have fun—the sport is supposed to be fun. Especially at the Novice and Training levels the Jury is great about interacting with [you]. Remember to smile and enjoy it because it’s about enjoying your time with your horse, your partnership, and your relationship.” 

**OVATION**  
IS INTRODUCING

# ECLIPSE

New look, same features  
you **KNOW** and **LOVE!**

**IN-MOLD  
HEXAGONAL  
VENTS**



BLACK

BLACK  
SILVER

Lightweight  
low-profile  
helmet. Easy to  
adjust dial fit.  
Removable and  
washable Coolmax®  
liners. High flow vents  
to keep you cool.  
**MSRP \$99.95**

Like us on  
ovationriding 

   
Dual Certified

www.OvationRiding.com