

# PATTERN Remix

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2004 AQHYA World Championship Show judges take a critical look back at five patterns from last year's finals to help you prepare for this year's show.

**By Christine Hamilton**

WITH THIS YEAR'S AQHYA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW just around the corner, the *Journal* asked judges from the 2004 Youth World to comment on five of the patterns from last year's finals. If you want to improve your performances in showmanship, horsemanship, trail, hunt seat equitation or equitation over fences, read on!

## **NO. 1: SHOWMANSHIP**

### **The Judges**

**Mark Sheridan, Stephanie Lynn**

### **Overview**

**Sheridan:** The key was to maintain a situational awareness in the arena, keeping a "heads up" for where you were. Look up and know exactly where you need to go all the time.

Know how big your horse is, how big a step he has, how wide or how tight you needed to go around the cones.

**Lynn:** We wanted the kids to come out and look like they were a really good hand with a horse. They knew their horses and were in tune with them.

### **Showmanship Judges' Pet Peeves**

#### *Gaudy outfits*

**Sheridan:** When the outfits are so distracting that it takes

my attention away from the actual go, it's going to lower the score. I'd like to see outfits look less like band uniforms and be more conservative, neat, clean and traditional with solid colors. A little sparkle is fine, but it's going to extremes with some. Just show me your horse.

#### *Posed look*

**Lynn:** I don't like a posed look instead of the confident look of a horseman. I don't like a too perky or perfect expression, a plastered, fake smile like you're smiling for a camera. I like to see a pleasant look; you show your confidence in the ease with which you handle the pattern.

#### *Crouching trot*

**Sheridan:** Don't bend over or crouch at the trot. Just trot like you're trotting from the house to the barn, or as if you went jogging and happened to have a horse alongside you.

#### *Low headset*

**Sheridan:** There's a new fad now of pulling down on the horse's head while showing. In my book, it's a score of zero. I've judged some kids where, as I walked around their horses, they grabbed the horse's head and pulled it down to waist level. I can't figure that one out.

## Hot Spots

1. Walk from A to B.
2. Trot from B, around C and D, and back to C.

**Sheridan:** Everything had to be straight lines. The walk had to be a perfectly straight line.

You needed to make sure you left enough room around cone C and around cone D: You didn't want to go too wide, yet you didn't want to cut the corner and take the chance of hitting the cone. I wanted to see about the same amount of room around cone C as on cone D, so everything looked symmetrical.

When you circled around cone D, you needed to be aware of where you were in the arena, so when you went to make that straight line coming back toward the judge, you didn't overshoot cone D and have to realign yourself.

**Lynn:** The competitors had a fairly long distance to trot here. I don't like to see a fake look when they're trotting. I want you to trot like you would if you had to trot your horse for a vet.

3. Stop and set up for inspection.
4. After inspection, execute  $1\frac{1}{2}$  turn to the right.

**Lynn:** Most of them handled the turn very well. You had to know your horse so you could place the horse's hind leg in the setup exactly where it needed to be for the turn, and then back to that cone correctly. Doing that number of turns, the horse's hip stands a chance of moving slightly.

5. Back to C.

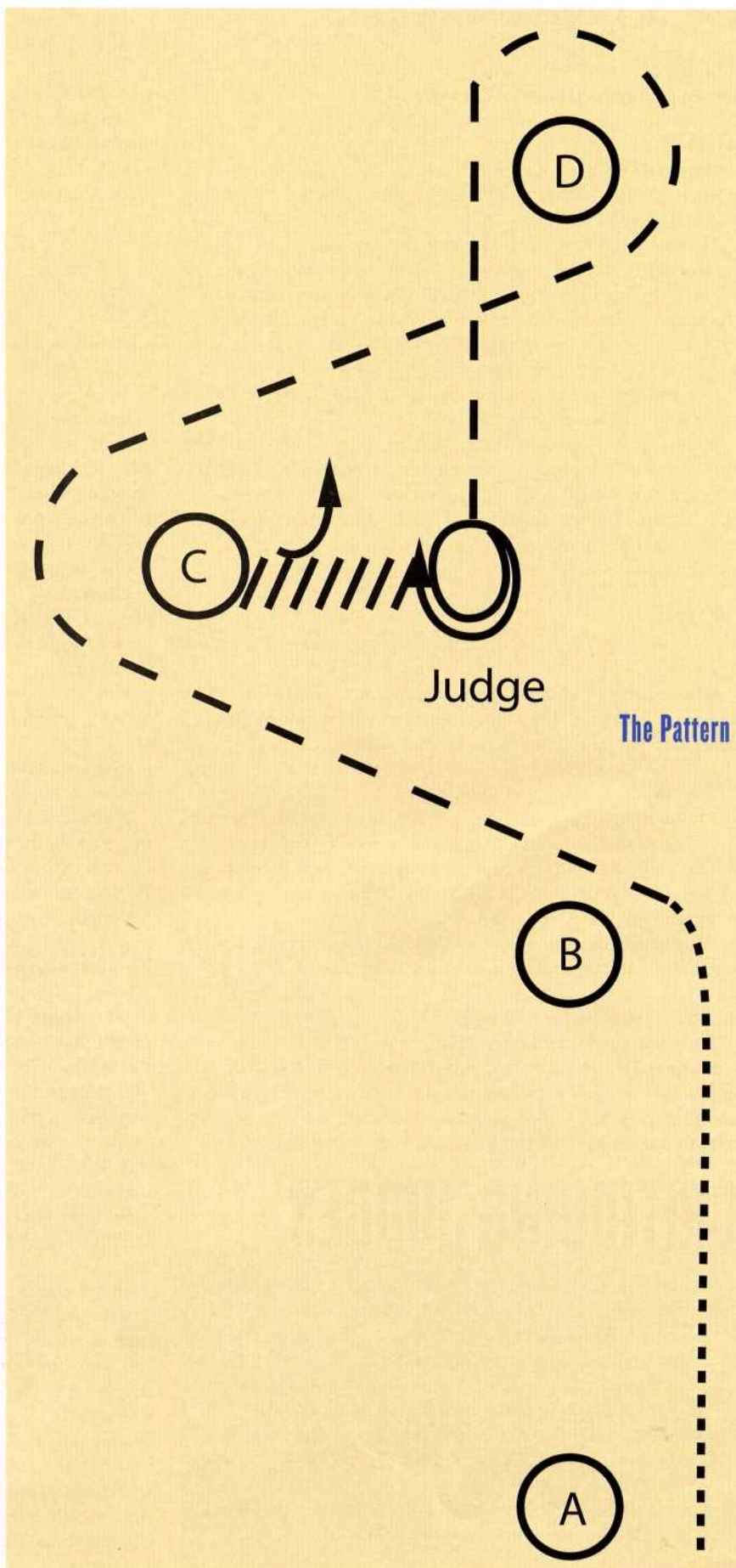
**Sheridan:** The back needed to be a perfectly straight line, and you had to be careful how far you backed so you didn't hit cone C.

On the back-up, I don't want you to have to push on the horse, but I don't mind if you have to take a light hold. Throughout the pattern, if you take hold of your horse lightly to back him up, or to trot or turn, it will not hurt your score as long as it's a light touch, as long as you're not grabbing the horse with the chain, pulling on him or pushing him to back up. Your horse cannot lean on the chain.

**Lynn:** I do not like to see kids step in front of their horses to back up. That eliminated some good showmen in the prelims.

6. Execute a  $\frac{1}{2}$  turn to the left and line up at ring steward's instructions.

**Sheridan:** I'm not a fan of left turns, but if the pattern calls for it, you need to pivot off the left hind foot. If you're turning right, pivot off the right hind.



## NO. 2: HORSEMANSHIP

### The Judges

Mark Sheridan, Buddy Fisher.

### Overview

**Sheridan:** I could tell that a lot of the horses had practiced this pattern too much: They were anticipating the pattern.

When the horse anticipates the pattern, you're not in control. The horse keys in to what he thinks he should be doing and not following your commands. You want him to rely on what you're telling him to do and not on his memory of how you've practiced the pattern 10 times, because he *will* mess it up.

I would suggest practicing the entire pattern maybe twice, and then practice parts of it.

**Fisher:** Pulled off pretty, this pattern looked simple. But it required a lot of preparation at home. It's an intricate pattern with a lot of transitions. Before you get to the Youth World, those need to be mastered. This is a pretty comprehensive final exam because it uses almost every transition.

### Hot Spots

1. Jog half way from 1 to 2. Extend the jog, executing a partial square to 2.

**Sheridan:** To make a crisp, sharp turn, the horse has to steer sharp. It's all about neck reining: When you point your hand left, the horse has to make that turn.

2. Stop and do a 360° turn to the right.

**Fisher:** How fast you spin does not matter to me. There are some horses that can spin fast and make it look pretty. If the horse is dragging and not a pretty-spinning horse, that'll come into play, too. But your horse doesn't have to be a fast spinner: It needs to be smooth, pretty and fluid.

As you finish that turn, you should step right into that right lead, and lope off without any hesitation.

3. Lope a small circle to the right.

4. Execute a simple lead change.

**Fisher:** The simple lead change is harder to execute and make look pretty. As you come around, you have to break to the trot, and then pick up the opposite lead. You don't want to trot very far, but the simple lead change means you break gait.

## CRITIQUING JUDGES

**Charlene Carter**, Goodlettsville, Tennessee—Instructs out of Carter Quarter Horses. AQHA judge since 2000.

**Buddy Fisher**, Abilene, Texas—Trains out of Buddy Fisher Quarter Horses. AQHA judge since 1998.

**Stephanie Lynn**, Fall Creek, Wisconsin—Trains out of Stephanie Lynn Show Horses. AQHA judge since 2001.

**Kim Meadors-Hall**, Keller, Texas—Instructs out of Sunny Meadow Farm. AQHA judge since 2001, (restricted over fences).

**Mark Sheridan**, Cave Creek, Arizona—Trains out of Mark Sheridan Stables. AQHA judge since 1993.

Don't forget those basic maneuvers; a great baseball player works on the basics all the time.

5. Lope left circle with increased speed.

**Sheridan:** The right circle needs to be definitely smaller than the left circle. And the right circle needs to be definitely slower than the left circle. There needs to be a clear differentiation between the two. Just show me a difference.

6. Complete circle and stop and do a 360° turn to the left.

7. Extended trot, executing a partial square to 1.

**Fisher:** When you go around the large circle with increased speed, stop, turn, and hit that extended jog out—that was one of the most difficult parts of the pattern. If you got too aggressive there, you could blow the pattern by your horse loping off, or making it rough trying to get that extended jog. Right there you had to know your horse.

Some of the riders extended that line before the turn because they were trying to get the extended jog. Some of them really didn't get an extended jog until they were around the corner. You sure didn't want to make that corner at a slow jog, but you should also mimic the line that you came in on (from steps 1 to 2).

**Sheridan:** The key to this maneuver is to step your horse off in a jog, just for a step or two to make sure the horse understands that your intentions are not to lope, and then push them up from the jog. Some of the kids would spin their horses around to the left and try to jump them into that extended trot, and they broke into a lope.

8. Stop and back.

9. Exit arena at a jog.

**Fisher:** It's easy to forget that last step. When you back up, everybody usually starts clapping if you've had a really great run, but don't forget that last step. It's on the pattern. If someone were to walk or lope out, it would significantly lower the score.

### Horsemanship Judges' Pet Peeves

*Stirrups too long*

**Sheridan:** I saw some riders with stirrups too long. They might have been told to do that to make a straighter line from the top of their shoulders down to their heels.

A large part of horsemanship is putting weight in your stirrups and riding properly; equal weight distribution creates more balance. From the profile it might look like a longer, straighter line, where you have less bend in the knee, but you have to have bend in the knee to put proper weight in your stirrups.

If I see space between the bottom of the foot and the stirrup, I make hard deductions.

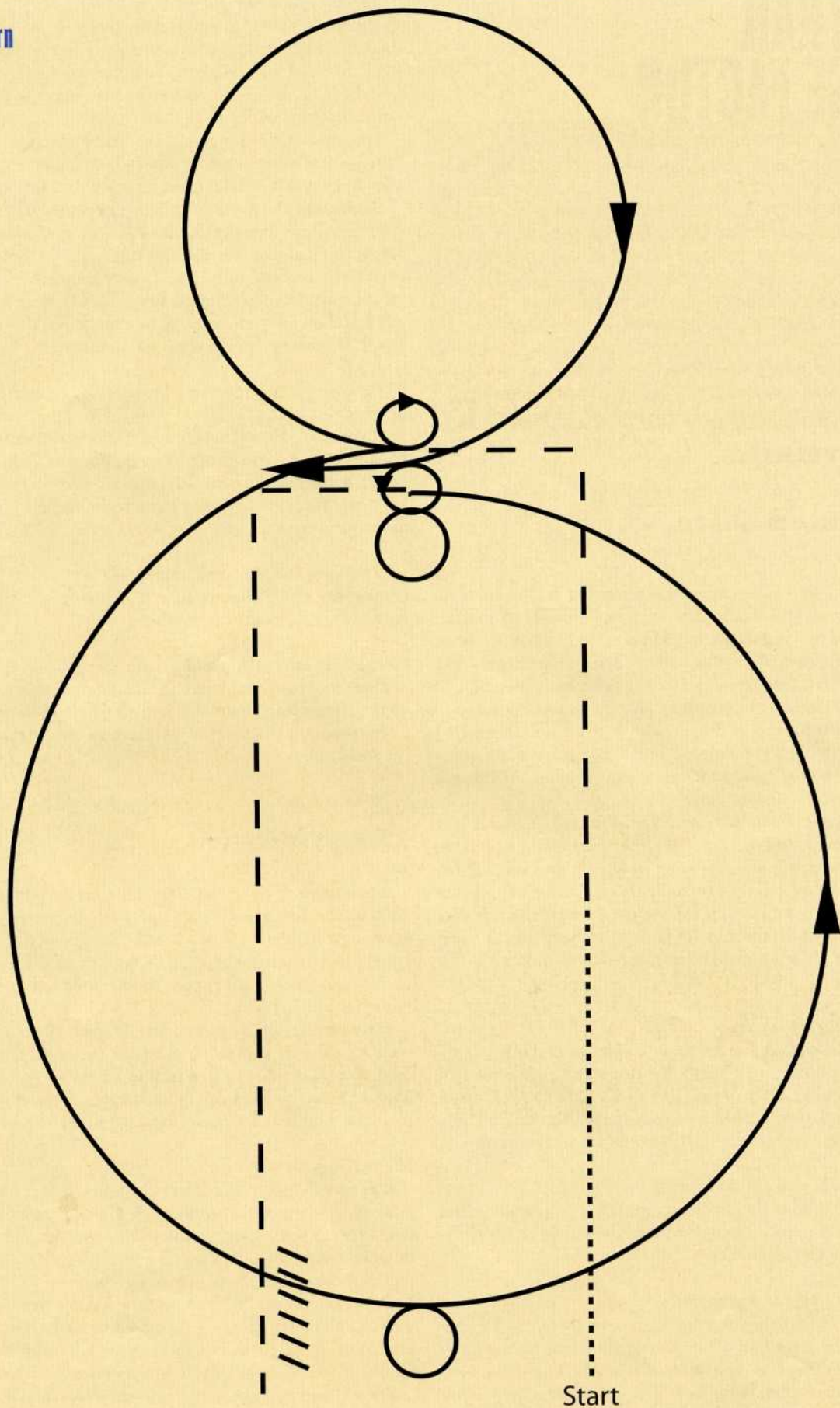
*Poor leg position*

**Fisher:** I'm seeing a lot of riders with their legs too far behind them. I've seen it in the hunt seat, too.

There are reasons why the legs should be where they're supposed to be. Go try to ride a cow horse or a reiner or jump a fence with your leg too far back. Try to do it with your leg too far out in front of you, for that matter.

Let's take four or five of the top professionals and watch them ride from hunt seat to working hunter, from western pleasure to reined cow horse and cutting. They're not concerned about their leg position, but it'll be correct, because it's correct for a reason.

The Pattern



# THE TRAIL HORSE FACTOR

**Sheridan:** Style points come into play in the finals when you have this many good horses. If everybody's clean, you're going to have style points: the horse that's the best mover, has less hesitation and picks his feet up. The horse that has more expression on his face, his ears are up, he looks pleasant and appears to enjoy the event will score higher.

**Carter:** You used to be able to take a good, ol' horse that wasn't a great mover, that couldn't do pleasure, and make him a great trail horse. As difficult as these patterns have become with these new combinations, a horse has got to be an extremely good mover. They can't manipulate through close quarters, look pretty and float through if they're not good movers.

## NO. 3: TRAIL

### The Judges

**Mark Sheridan, Charlene Carter**

### Overview

**Sheridan:** I like to see very little hesitation when people go through a course; you should flow from one obstacle to another. You don't have to speed through it, but don't take too much time.

The toughest part about this pattern is remembering it. Stay focused and always look forward. Before leaving each obstacle, you have to be looking ahead to the next obstacle to be in position to approach it with the proper distance and at the correct angles.

**Carter:** The biggest factor is a horse that is willfully guided; he stays framed and under that rider's hand. The horse can't ever say "no" to that rider.

If a mistake is made, a rider has absolutely got to forget that error and move on to the next part of the course. Maintain a sweeping and dynamic flow to gain extra credit. It is possible to overcome a mistake, if you make a sparkling recovery on the remainder of the course. Many exhibitors let one mistake wreck the entire pattern. They simply quit showing. Not all winners have mistake-free rounds.

### Hot Spots

1. *Jog over poles. Jog into chute.*

**Carter:** Having to jog in at an angle, and then sharply turn back to the left, that was a lot to put in a maneuver in such a tight space. A lot of practice will give you a real sense of space as it relates to the size of your horse. You will be able to conquer these tight spaces with no hesitation or doubts.

2. *Back around corner. Jog out of chute.*

**Sheridan:** Finding the correct angles is important. You don't want to put your horse into a position where it's difficult to achieve the maneuver.

3. *Jog over poles. Jog through serpentine.*

4. *Jog over poles up to gate. Gate: left hand ride over poles, close gate.*

**Carter:** The gate had a raised log, and you had to step over two more logs as you went through. That was very tedious, and it was amazing how many did a really nice job on that.

5. *Lope over poles in right lead.*

**Carter:** The more logs you have to go across and the more combinations, the more your horse has a chance to back off and get weaker. You had to really be on target and be a good rider to keep your pace with that many combinations of logs.

You also had to get all the correct strides. The strides changed so much: there was a two-stride and then one, then two and then three. You had to really be consistent.

**Sheridan:** The main thing here is to get the correct strides. The approach to any lope-over is the same: You need to look for the first log. If you nail that first distance right, and you keep the cadence, everything is going to be fine. If your approach to the first log is off, then you have to scramble to get back to your appropriate distance and regain your cadence. In a lope-over, things happen real fast. If it starts off poorly, it seldom gets better.

6. *Lope over pole in right lead. Break to jog, jog over 4 poles and stop before box.*

**Carter:** A lot of horses had a little difficulty right here because you had so much forward motion coming from the combination of the wheel lope-over, and then coming down that line at a trot. It was a little tight there to suddenly stop and walk into that box.

7. *Walk into box, 1 1/2 right turn, walk out.*

**Carter:** The difficulty here is in trying to add speed to the turn and still not touch anything.

8. *Lope over poles in left lead.*

**Carter:** Here, you went on diagonals across poles, but you weren't traveling in an arc. I think the arcs are a little harder to maintain than when you have to do a straight line over diagonal poles.

9. *Walk over poles, bridges and through water box and over "X."*

### Trail Judges' Pet Peeves

*Too slow*

**Sheridan:** The thing that kept many people from getting to the finals was missing their distances due to their horses going too slowly, and missing their lope-over spots. Not hitting the correct strides in a lope-over often comes from not riding your horse forward enough to get your distances right.

**Carter:** Too many horses are just too slow. They want to walk in the box and stop, and then turn and stop, and walk out. To win it, they've got to flow in there, go into that spin and walk out without much hesitation. A lot of them are just too slow, and it takes them forever to do the pattern.

*Not knowing the rules*

**Carter:** People don't study the rules. I feel like people sit outside the ring and comment on a tick here or a tick there, when there are all kinds of different penalties. Like, when you do your transitions, if it's a lope to a walk, if you add a little jog in there, there are penalties for that.

Or when people use romals, they don't know the correct way to hold them. They're supposed to have their hand closed around it, with 16 inches in between (the rein hand and the free hand). The extra hand is supposed to be by their side.

I don't think people come into the class totally aware of all the rules.

# The Pattern

