

# THE “WHITE PAD TEST”



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# SADDLE FIT: A THREE WAY RELATIONSHIP

- A Truly Complete Saddle Fitting
  - Requires:
    - A determination of the full relationship between
      - the horse
      - the saddle
      - the rider

# WAYS TO DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP

- The “White Pad” Method
- Impression Pads
- Computer



## Port Lewis Impression Pad



[www.rocler.qc.ca.portlewis](http://www.rocler.qc.ca.portlewis)

450-264-3421

# Port Lewis Impression Pad



Before



After

# Computer Pressure Mapping



# PRESSURE MAPPING / COMPUTER

- Computer Saddle Fitting
  - Can Determine Pressure Points With Rider Up
  - Gives info on Wt Deformation
  - Interpretation Learning Curve
- Can Only Tell You Saddle Fits or Does Not Fit
- Expensive: eg: Novel pressure mapping from Germany
- Not very available

# THE “WHITE PAD” METHOD

- Principles and Concepts
  - Powder Back with Carpenter’s Chalk
  - Place White Pad
  - Place and Secure Saddle
  - Ride the Horse
  - Chalk is Transferred to the Horse
    - Density of color will be directly proportional to the amount of pressure from panels/bars
  - Remove Saddle and Pads
  - “Read the Pad”



# MATERIALS REQUIRED

- White Pad
  - For English: Square Cotton Dressage Pad
  - For Western: Square Cotton Dressage Pad + ½ inch Navaho Pad or Folded Blanket
- Carpenter's Marking Chalk
  - What is it?
  - Choose a Color that will show well on the pad and contrast well on the horse.
- Mounting Block

# PROCEDURE

- Desirable to have the horse warmed up
- Evenly powder the back – Moderate amt.
  - Effects of too little powder
  - Effects of too much powder
  - Work the powder into the coat
    - Use a make-up brush
  - Spray back very lightly with water

# PROCEDURE PART 2

- Very carefully place the pad on the horse's back
  - Caveats: Safety and Accuracy of placement
- Very carefully place the saddle on the back and secure
- Rider mounts carefully from a mounting block

# PROCEDURE (3)

- Warm the horse up for 5 minutes (if not previously done)
- Ride the horse for 15 minutes
  - In manner consistent with normal use, discipline, level of training
- Rider carefully dismounts
  - Caution don't pull saddle to one side

# PROCEDURE (4)

- Carefully remove saddle
  - Lift straight up (Helps to have two people)
- Carefully remove the pad
  - Lift straight up (helps to have two people)
- Ready to “read” the pad

# PAD EVALUATION

- Pad will pick up chalk
  - Density of color will be in direct proportion to amount of pressure
    - No chalk on pad – no contact
    - Deep color in spots or areas – Pressure points
- Ideal would be uniform distribution and density
  - Rarely happens

# PAD EVALUATION

- Symmetry (side to side)
  - Typically lack full symmetry
  - Lack of symmetry may not be fault of saddle
    - Fit of saddle with weight of rider will affect symmetry
- Conformation and postural deficits of the rider can cause pattern asymmetry

# OTHER REASONS FOR ASYMMETRY

- Asymmetry in conformation and balance of the horse
- Broken or warped/twisted tree or bars
- Unevenly flocked or compressed panels
- Panels or bars not installed symmetrically on the tree
- Billets or rigging not symmetrical



# COMMON FAULTS IDENTIFIED

- Bridging
  - Dense patterns or spots typically at pommel portion and at/near cantle end (4 legged table)
    - Pattern may or may not be symmetrical
  - If bridge found in static phase of saddle on the back:
    - Can determine effect of rider's weight on deformation of the saddle
    - Can determine appropriateness of any bridge built into the saddle design

# COMMON FAULTS IDENTIFIED

- Trees too narrow/steep in pitch/rafter
  - Increased density low in wither pocket and along outside edge of panels/bars
- Trees too wide/open in pitch/rafter
  - Increased density high in wither pocket and along inside edge of panels/bars

# COMMON FAULTS IDENTIFIED

- Stirrup bars that are set too deep
  - Show as dense areas (pressure points)
  - Bar may move the flocking up and make pressure
  - Should not be any chalk pickup over proper depth stirrup bars

# COMMON FAULTS IDENTIFIED

- Chalk pickup over the midline
  - Possibilities:
    - Inadequate pommel clearance...
    - Inadequate clearance along channel...
    - Inadequate channel width...
    - Pressure on spine during lateral work...
    - Broken tree

# POOR MAN'S PRESSURE MAPPING SYSTEM

- Inexpensive
- Effective
- Yields a lot of valuable information
- Can allow you to try several saddles to see the best fit
- Pads are easily cleaned and re-used time after time

# DYNAMIC MEASUREMENT

- Demonstrates the link and appropriateness of saddle with the rider-up and the horse in work
- Remember that a “bad” pattern may not be the saddle
  - May be related to the rider
    - Balance, Conformation, Posture and Equitation Skill
  - May be related to the horse
    - Balance, Conformation, and Posture

# OBSERVE THE HORSE DURING THE WORK PHASE

- Observe the head carriage
  - Is the horse above the bit?
  - Are the rider's hands harsh or unyielding?
  - Is the back hollowed?
  - Watch for signs of resistance

# OBSERVE THE HORSE DURING THE WORK PHASE

- A horse with head above the bit and back hollowed:  
(Think about causes)
  - Seriously affects saddle fit – saddle will bridge and pinch



# FOLLOW UP WHITE PAD TESTS

- Affordable
- Costs allow rider to do sequential evaluations throughout the competition season
  - Change in back shape due to weight loss, change in muscling, dental or shoeing issues

# AN ADDITIONAL EVALUATION PLUS

- Examine the residual chalk pattern on the horse (the reason for using a chalk color that contrasts well with the horse)
  - Where there has been pressure: the chalk will have been removed from the back and found on the white pad
  - Where there is a break in the contact: the chalk will remain on the horse's back

# STRONG VISUAL REFERENCE FOR THE RIDER/CLIENT

- A picture is worth a thousand words
- Great idea to video the working phase
  - Educational for the rider and a graphic record
- Suggest you take a digital image of the pad “reading”



More pressure at cantle on left, and on right shoulder



Broken Tree



Asymmetrical Shoulder



Uneven shoulders



Too much pressure on cantle of saddle



- Each time you do a “White Pad Test” you will become more astute and knowledgeable

*The goal is to get an even  
chalk pattern on the white  
pad*