

MAKE

Tackle the horsemanship finals pattern

from the 2016 Lucas Oil AQHA

World Championship Show.

a Plan

By AQHA

Professional Horsewoman

Rhonda Replogle

with Larri Jo Starkey

Photos by Larri Jo Starkey

WHETHER YOU ARE AT AN AQHA AFFILIATE'S HORSE SHOW ON the weekend or preparing to enter the arena at one of the AQHA world championship shows, having a plan is essential.

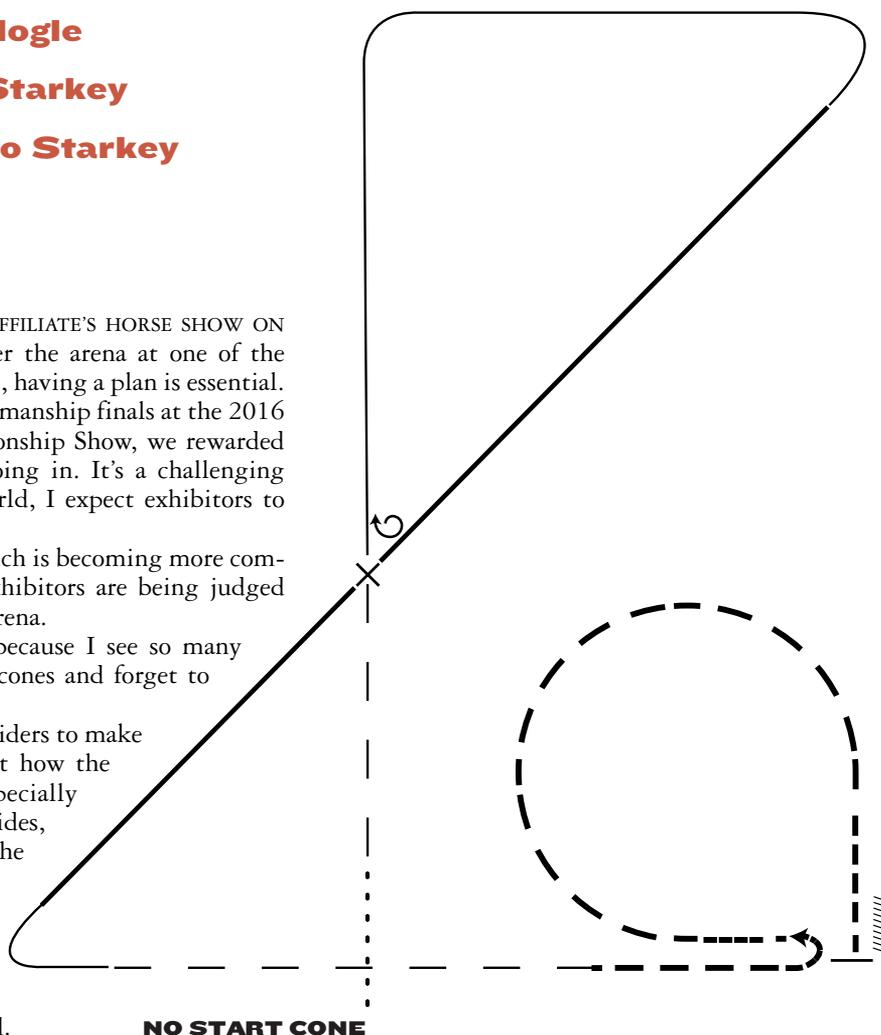
When I judged the Level 3 horsemanship finals at the 2016 Lucas Oil AQHA World Championship Show, we rewarded the exhibitors who had a plan going in. It's a challenging pattern, but at the Lucas Oil World, I expect exhibitors to step up their game.

It's a pattern without a cone, which is becoming more common. When there isn't a cone, exhibitors are being judged from the moment they enter the arena.

I like patterns without cones, because I see so many exhibitors become worried about cones and forget to show their horses.

A pattern without cones allows riders to make some of their own decisions about how the pattern should flow. That's especially important for horses with larger strides, because the exhibitor can make the pattern a little larger.

I've asked two of my youth clients, Sloane Vogt and Jessica Doyle, to try their hands at this pattern. I'll tell you what I discussed with them before we started.



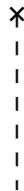
AQHA Professional Horsewoman Rhonda Replege signals arena readiness during the 2016 Lucas Oil AQHA World Championship Show.





1. Walk

I want to see a horse with a “showy” walk. Walk forward and have a four-beat gait. Since the pattern calls for stepping immediately into an extended jog, having a forward walk is beneficial.



2. Extended trot to the middle

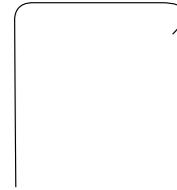
Cluck to your horse and ask him to trot up to the middle strongly.



3. Stop, 360-degree right turn



Step right into your stop from your extended trot. Whenever you stop, it has to be a dead stop with all four feet. A horse has to know what “Whoa” means: planting all four feet on the ground at once. The 360-degree turn to the right should be on the haunches with a planted foot.



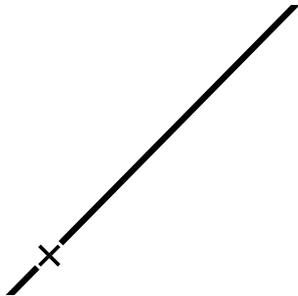
4. Lope on right lead around two corners



Immediately lope off onto the right lead. You’ll need to plan how you’re going to signal your horse quickly and precisely, because the turn is to the right and then the lope is on the right lead. I would suggest stepping off as soon as you finish the 360 but not rushing into it. In the last quarter of the turn, begin to prepare for this departure. Keep the pattern flowing.

Coming around these tight corners, use your outside leg and outside seat bone to guide your horse. This will force the horse’s ribcage and body to funnel underneath you so the horse can keep his forward motion.

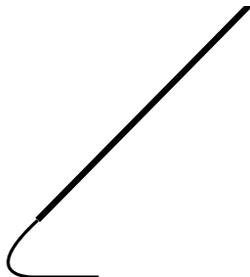
Make the corners nice and round. Keep guiding with your outside aids to ensure your horse doesn’t think “lead change” around the corner. Use your inside leg as a wall so the horse’s shoulder and inside ribcage don’t fall to the inside.



5. Lope with increased pace diagonally across the arena, change leads

Where you stopped and made your 360-degree right turn is where your lead change should be. Since experienced show horses are so lead-change oriented, a lot of them will be looking for a lead change when you ask for an extension. Make sure to keep your lead leg on and communicate with your horse to keep him framed and balanced during the extension all the way to the lead change.

I would suggest going three strides ahead and counting down “3, 2, 1, change.” Most riders suck back in a lead change because they slow down. You have to keep riding through the lead change and not lose forward motion.



6. Continue lope with increased pace, collect to a lope around corner

Continue to ride the extension until right before the corner. Walking this part of the pattern and knowing the number of strides would be important to completing this part of the pattern. Make sure to bring your



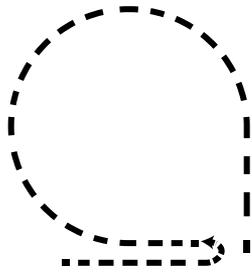
horse back to a collected lope before the corner. Through the corner, be sure to keep the horse in the same body frame, cadence and rhythm. Sit into your right seat bone and right leg as you come around the corner to balance to horse’s ribcage.

This is a lot of loping – a lot of pattern – but it helps the judges see which riders are in tune with their horses. Judges want to see someone who is guiding, not just sitting on a horse.

7. Jog 2/3 of line across arena

Break down to the jog.





8. Extended trot 1/3 of line, turn back and continue the extended trot through a circle



While making the horse go forward, make sure to guide and communicate through the turn so the horse does not lope off. Through the turn, make sure to keep the horse's mouth in your hand. You want to feel the horse without taking too tight a hold or overbridling the horse. Ideally, the horse will yield in your hand and keep the withers below your hand.

Keeping the withers below your hand allows a horse's chin and ribcage to move with you during the tight turn. Guide is important in this turn to make sure the horse uses its flow of motion with its shoulders, making the entire turn more fluid.

Lift up, keep the horse moving and pivot around the turn, while clucking to the rhythm of the extended trot. Make sure to keep a consistent rhythm and not go faster and slower throughout the pattern. Make sure not to slow down just because it is a tight corner. It should be fast, and it should flow.

Make sure not to go past the red line. If your circle goes further than that, it will be a minus maneuver. The circle should be the shape of a D-ring.



9. Stop and back

Drive to the end of the D-ring circle and then stop. The stop needs to be in line with the previous trot line. The judges will notice if you are not in line.

Make sure to back five to eight steps. If your horse backs well, show that off. If the horse does not back well, back up five steps, or if your horse begins to back crooked, stop at six steps.

10. Exit at walk or jog

Leaving the pattern should be clean. I would say jog out of there to give consideration to the next rider performing the pattern. 🐾

Larri Jo Starkey is senior editor of the Journal. Elizabeth Ellis also contributed to this article. To comment, write to lstarkey@aqha.org.



AQHA Professional Horsewoman RHONDA REPLOGLE trains horses and riders from her facility in Clear Spring, Maryland. Rhonda is a respected clinician and judge who judged the 2016 Lucas Oil AQHA World Championship Show. She has also judged most major shows in the United States and around the world. The 20-year breeder is most associated with Sky Blue Walker and bred the 2017 amateur and open jumping world champion, Skys Burnin Blue. Rhonda's youth riders Sloane Vogt of Berlin, Pennsylvania, and Jessica Doyle of Boonsboro, Maryland, were the demonstration riders for this article.

