

# The Quarterly Collection

NEWS AND MONTHLY UPDATES FOR THE WORKING EQUITATION RIDER

## President's Ponderings

WRITTEN BY JUDY MACKENZIE

Greetings AZWEC Members,

Our Finals are approaching! Many people have already qualified for AZWEC Finals - but there are still opportunities to get qualifying scores! Entries are still open for the following shows:

26th October - Patterson Training, Payson

2nd November - Schooling Show, Orme School, Mayer

24th November - Schooling Show, Brandi Fenton, Tucson

More information on these shows and entry forms can be found via our website: [www.azwec.org](http://www.azwec.org). Finals this year will be at Chaparosa Ranch/R & R Ranch in Rio Verde, 6th-8th December.

And then we roll into 2025! Our Show Committee is already working on a fabulous schedule of shows and events for AZWEC in the New Year!

Also, as we move towards the end of our year, we will be seeking Nominations for open Board/Committee positions. Please consider volunteering to step up and help your club - don't be shy!

Hope to see you all at an event soon!

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# AZWEC News

WRITTEN BY JUDY MACKENZIE

## Western Zone Championships

Congratulations to AZWEC+ Members Ginger Franz and Mary Kimball, who both completed in the USAWE Western Zone Championships in Oregon in September. In L1 Ginger and Kilate RM placed 3rd, and in L3 Mary and Wicked Stowaway placed 3rd.

## Points and Standings

Here is the link to the current status for Year End Awards for both Schooling and Rated Shows:

<https://www.azwec.org/points-and-standings/>

\*You will need to log in as a Member to view the tables.

## AZWEC State Finals

Finals will take place 6th-8th December 2024 at Chaparosa Ranch/R & R Ranch in Rio Verde.

**There are still 3 more shows at which riders can get qualifying scores:**

October 26th - Rated Show  
Patterson Training, Payson

November 2nd- Schooling Show  
Orme School, Mayer

November 24th- Schooling Show  
Oracle Equestrian Center, Tucson



For news around the country,  
please visit [www.usawe.org](http://www.usawe.org)

# Synchronized Strides

## Melissa Bravenec & Tally's Journey in Working Equitation

WRITTEN BY KASEY REEDER

Melissa's love for horses has been a lifelong passion, though it wasn't until later in life that she truly immersed herself in the equestrian world. Growing up in Texas, she was a horse lover from the word go, but without access to horses, her dreams remained just that—dreams. It wasn't until she was in her 40s that Melissa finally had the opportunity to begin her riding career, starting with trail riding.

Seven years ago, a chance meeting with Amy Star introduced Melissa to the exhilarating world of Working Equitation. This discipline, with its blend of precision, speed, and versatility, immediately captured her heart. However, the journey wasn't always smooth. Melissa faced her fair share of fear issues, which initially held her back. But with the support of her friend Carol and the challenges presented by Working Equitation, she gradually overcame those fears, growing in confidence and skill.

The loss of her beloved mustang was a heartbreaking setback, leaving her in search of a new partner who could match her passion and enthusiasm for the sport. This search was a difficult one, filled with ups and downs, until an unexpected opportunity arose. Carol, the friend who had stood by her side through her fear issues, approached Melissa with a unique proposition—she asked Melissa if she would ride her horse, Talley.

Talley, a six-year-old Quarter Horse, turned out to be the perfect partner Melissa had been searching for. From their first ride together, it was clear that they had a special connection. Talley quickly became the sparkle in Melissa's eye, reigniting her passion for riding and competition. With Talley, Melissa has found not just a horse to ride, but a partner with whom she can continue to explore the depths of Working Equitation.

Together, Melissa and Talley have been a dynamic duo in the Arizona Working Equitation Club (AZWEC), showcasing not just technical skill but the deep bond that makes their partnership truly special. Their story is one of resilience, friendship, and the joy of finding the right partner, both human and equine.

In Working Equitation, the synchronicity between rider and horse is paramount, and Melissa and Talley exemplify this harmony in every stride they take together. As they continue to compete and grow, their journey serves as an inspiration to others in the club—proving that it's never too late to pursue your passion and that the right partnership can make all the difference.



Melissa & Tally



# At the Heart of Horsemanship: Developing an Independent Seat

WRITTEN BY KASEY REEDER

In the world of horsemanship, the essence of effective riding lies in clear, two-way communication between rider and horse. To achieve this, you must first have complete control over your own body. It's not enough to simply give commands—you need to be in the right position, over the horse's center of gravity, applying the correct sequence of aids with the appropriate pressure and timing. This level of control and communication hinges on one fundamental concept: an independent seat.

An independent seat is the foundation of good riding and should be the goal of every rider, every ride. It enables you to move with your horse effortlessly, without the need to grip or hold on for balance, regardless of what your horse does underneath you.

A correct seat is not just a fundamental skill but a necessity for anyone aiming to reach the upper levels of any equestrian discipline. A rider with an independent seat can move each body part independently, with each muscle group functioning without compensating for another. This rider can balance perfectly over the horse's center of gravity at any gait, without gripping, tilting, or losing alignment.

The journey to an independent seat begins on the ground. If a rider cannot control their body parts independently before mounting, there won't be a magical transformation once your bum touches the saddle.

Relaxation is the foundation upon which an independent seat is built. This relaxation starts on the ground, where riders learn how their body language communicates with their horse.

Understanding that even the smallest movements can elicit significant responses from the horse is key.

When this understanding of rhythm and relaxation carries over into the saddle, the rider can maintain a relaxed yet connected posture, allowing for clear communication through their aids.

A rider who grips with their thighs and knees, locking their ankles and creating tension, might give the appearance of good form, however, biomechanically it blocks effective communication with the horse. The aids become like static on a cell phone call—garbled and unclear. Over time, the horse may start to ignore these constant, unclear pressures.

In contrast, the rider with an independent seat is completely relaxed, yet able to use both the arms, legs, and their seat independently of each other to use whenever needed in applying the aids. Their joints are flexible and soft, and their movements flow in rhythm with the horse's gaits. There is no unnecessary tension, allowing for clear, precise communication with the horse.

All it takes to experience the euphoric feeling of oneness with your horse is to develop a connected and balanced seat and **it is achievable for any dedicated rider!**



**“In order to influence the horse’s shape, gait, and cadence, a rider must be in the right position - over the horse’s center of gravity - to apply the right sequence of aids with the right degree of pressure and in the right timing.” - The Rider’s Mechanic™**



# Dressage Tips

WRITTEN BY ANNE GRIBBONS

If you've ever wondered what separates a 65 percent from a 70 percent, you are not alone. Many riders at some point in their careers find themselves consistently placing in the middle of the pack and feeling a little stuck. They practice their test diligently, they listen to the advice of their instructors, they study their peers and they do well, but can't seem to break into the top of their class. We asked three of the world's best judges: How can we ride a winning dressage test? Here is their advice.

## 1. Ride Centerlines

Our first expert, Anne Gribbons, FEI 5\* judge and U.S. dressage coach from 2010 to 2013, encourages riders to incorporate centerlines into their daily work. "To ride a centerline correctly you need a good degree of balance and straightness. The horse must be even on both reins and obedient to the half halt. The entrance must be straight, the downward transition must be smooth and the halt square. The horse must stand at attention, with his nose on the vertical, ready for the upward transition, which must be prompt and energetic. This is the first thing that the judges see and it will make an impression. The problem is that many riders are not comfortable riding on the centerline. They do all kinds of exercises to supple the horse, but they don't ride him straight down the centerline. Straightness is not the very first level of the Training Scale, but it is one of the more important ones and it should be addressed fairly early in the horse's training.

"Now let's talk about the downward transition to halt and its preparation," continues Gribbons. "When the horse trots or canters down, he must be balanced over his hind legs so that his front legs come down like snowflakes on the ground. He has already taken the weight behind so he is sitting down a little bit. Then he drops his front legs down and he is perfectly square. And that kind of a halt looks good from all angles. He should then stand, immobile and attentive with his nose on the vertical, and wait for the rider's forward aid. The transition upward must be engaged and energetic, and that is not so easy after the horse has been standing stock-still. If the horse is the least bit behind the leg, it will not look good. He will take the first step with the front legs and shuffle forward." Practice is really the only way to perfect a centerline, says Gribbons. "Incorporate centerlines into your daily work. Practice going down in trot or canter and shortening the strides as if preparing for halt, but keep moving. It is important to vary where you halt on the centerline and also to ride down the centerline many times without halting at all. The horse must always think "forward" and not anticipate the downward transition. It's the horse's responsibility to keep moving until you ask him to stop. Ride this line habitually until your horse is totally comfortable going straight and is waiting for your directive whether it's a pirouette, leg yield or a halt."



**"To ride a centerline correctly you need a good degree of balance and straightness."**  
~ Anne Gribbons

# Sponsor Highlight

WRITTEN BY KASEY REEDER

Dear Sponsors,

On behalf of the Arizona Working Equitation Club, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support. Your contributions play a crucial role in making this event a success, and we are truly appreciative of your commitment to the equestrian community.

We would especially like to acknowledge our individual sponsors who are supporting each level of competition. Your generosity not only enhances the experience for all participants but also allows us to offer special awards for Dressage High Point, EOH High Point, and the fastest speed time.

Thank you for believing in our mission and helping us create a memorable experience for everyone involved. We look forward to your continued support in the future.

Warm regards,

Arizona Working Equitation Club

***L1 - Susan Hapak/4 Star Ranch***

***L2 - Elizabeth Sims/Silver Stables***

***L3 - Tessa Nicolet/Cohesive Horsemanship***

***L4 - Beth High/ Aim High Stables***

***L5 - Judy Mackenzie/Happy Horsemanship***

***L6 - Overman Designs***

***L7- Overman Designs***

***Dressage High Point - Tania Radda/ Radda Ranch***

***EOH High Point - Overman Designs***

***Fastest Speed Trial- Tami Blakely/ Blakely Ranch***



**We are deeply grateful to our sponsors for their generous support. Your commitment empowers us to create unforgettable experiences and strengthens our vibrant equestrian community.**

# Welcome New Members!

*WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!*

*Steve Hill*

*Terri OLeary*

*Amie Alexander*

*Audra Lenhart*

*Beverly Klemme*

*Stephanie Larson*

*Pamela Brown-Poissoit*

*Danielle Miller*

*Shantel Glick*

*Sandra Germann*

*Lauren Gueswel*

*Dr. Anna Nina Lee*

*Stefanie Daratony*

*Shelly Jacobs*

*Jessie Balcom*

*Jane Hudon*

*Marilyn Sieckmann*

*Stacey Lent*

*Ann Baldwin*

*Kris Mehrabani*

*Darlene Hayes*

*Julie Hyzdu*

*Sarah Porte*

*Heather Carlson*

*Stephanie Hackett*

*Carol Stearns*

*Kasey Reeder*

*Natalie Higgins*

*Victoria Woods*

*Mary Kimball*



# WELCOME

# Overcoming Obstacles

WRITTEN BY JUDY MACKENZIE

**A. Description.** A jug sits on top of a small table or other platform that is at least 1.2-m (4-ft) high. A manufactured table is not required; a table-like platform may be constructed of common materials (e.g., hay bales, sacks of grain, etc.) The jug must have a handle. The jug must be placed in the same position for each competitor. Obstacle markers must be used to indicate direction of approach and exit. The entry and exit markers indicate the start and end of the obstacle, not the transition.

**B. Execution.** The rider approaches the table in the prescribed gait, halts with the rider's leg even with the table, raises the jug above her/his head, and replaces the jug on the table. The horse must be immobile throughout the lifting and replacing of the jug. The horse must depart at the same gait as it approached the obstacle. If the jug is dropped, a member of the ground crew will hand the jug to the riders competing at the Introductory (L1) level. Novice (L2/L3) level riders must dismount, retrieve the jug, remount and replace the jug on the table, or may request permission to pass and receive a 0 mark. Intermediate (L4) through Masters (L7) riders must dismount, retrieve the jug, remount, and replace the jug; failure to do so will result in disqualification.

If the table is knocked over by the horse or rider at any time during the execution of the obstacle (i.e., between the obstacle markers), a member of the ground crew will reset the table and hand the jug to the L1 riders. L2/L3 riders must dismount, reset the table, remount with the jug in hand, and replace the jug on the table from horseback, or may request permission to pass and receive a 0 mark. L4 through L7 riders must dismount, reset the table, remount, and replace the jug; failure to do so will result in disqualification.

**C. Assessment Criteria (EOH).** The Judge will evaluate the approach to/departure from the obstacle and the horse's immobility when standing next to the table without showing any fear and trusting the rider's use of aids. The jug, when placed on the table, must remain upright. Any jarring movement against the table will result in a lower mark. Intermediate (L4) through Masters (L7) level riders will receive a higher mark for approaching the table at canter with a good canter-to-halt transition.

## Serious Mistakes:

- Lack of immobility at the halt
- Knocking over the table
- Severe resistance
- Poor transition from walk/canter to standstill



The jug obstacle in working equitation is not just a test of precision; it embodies the partnership between horse and rider, showcasing their trust and communication as they navigate the challenge together.



# Resource Roundup

**Teresa Bain**  
Lessons  
Kingman, AZ  
307-431-6702

**Megan Bennett**  
Lessons, Clinics, Show Manager, Schooling Show  
Judge  
Buckeye/Seligman

**Ashley Bowers**  
Lessons, Clinics, TD, Show Manager  
Phoenix, AZ  
623-221-7401

**Beth High**  
Schooling Show Judge, Scribe  
Tucson, AZ  
520-404-8144

**Judy Mackenzie**  
Lessons, Clinics, Show Manager, Scribe  
Payson, AZ  
303-358-6118

**Aimee Miller**  
Lessons  
Tucson, AZ  
520-554-2848

**Tessa Nicolet**  
Lessons, Judging, Show Manager,  
Schooling Show Judge, Clinics  
Payson, AZ  
928-951-4699

**Kasey Reeder**  
The Rider's Mechanic™  
Coaching, Clinics, Workshops, Seminars  
and Scribe  
Scottsdale, AZ  
602-571-6567

**Amy Star**  
Clinics, Lessons, Judging, Show Manager,  
TD  
Tucson, AZ  
520-591-3649

**Summer Star**  
Horse Training, Lessons, Schooling Show  
Judge  
Tucson, AZ  
520-255-2549

**Miguel Undabarrena**  
Judging, Horse Training, Lessons  
Phoenix, AZ  
602-293-7788

## UPCOMING EVENTS

FOR AN UP-TO-DATE LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS,  
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
[WWW.AZWEC.ORG](http://WWW.AZWEC.ORG)