

The Serpentine Exercise with Andrea Harris

Holly Grayton



Alberta seems to be experiencing an early spring, and with the good weather ABSJ went to Andrea Harris' Alpine Show Jumpers

for a great outdoor exercise: the Serpentine!

Andrea starts her ride with a thorough warm up to "calibrate the aids." Andrea says, "you want to balance your horse, get them to accept the aids, be on the aids, not too much on the bit. So in my warm up I ask all the buttons – lateral, lengthening, shortening, rhythm and relaxation."

ensures the horse waits for her and accepts the lateral aid before heading to the next one. Once content with the full serpentine, Andrea started to string in portions of the course set around the serpentine, adding in lines and getting her horse balanced and in rhythm.

"If my horse doesn't feel like he comes back to me, I just downward transition. I use my core, I stretch up, I push down into my heel, I carry my hand, I resist against his mouth, and I do a little bit more of a definite downward transition just to get him thinking about waiting for me."

Andrea continued, "The best jumps are when



We start an exercise that includes three parts: a single jump across the end of the arena, a single jump across the middle of the arena and a grid of three fences across the far end of the arena. Today the grid is a one-stride to one-stride combination consisting of tall X-rails. The middle fence of the grid has a liverpool underneath.

Andrea begins by jumping just the middle X, and on landing continues to calibrate her aids in preparation of continuing to the next jump - inside leg to outside rein, move the shoulder slightly in. Once that is comfortable, she jumps the middle X, lands and moves the shoulder in slightly while continuing to the grid, lands and applies inside leg to outside rein, half halts, and heads to the next jump. After each jump she

you can allow them to come up out of the turn, and that goes right into the quality of the canter. If your horse is in good balance you can leave long, you can leave short, the distance becomes a little bit less relevant when they're jumping off the same balance. So sometimes you see lots of accurate riders that can find the same footprints all the time, but do they find the same balance all the time? And I think that's what a lot of the top pros that you see in the international ring – they can get on multiple horses, they just know what the feel of the balance is, and they can recreate that on most horses, especially when the horse is athletic.'

Give Andrea's spring rideability exercise a try!