



Warm Up Ring Differences

Trevor Graham

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WARM UP RING DIFFERENCES

On my recent trip across the pond I happened upon Vancouver's Trevor Graham standing near the warm up ring at a show in Ireland. Trevor is originally from Ireland, though he now makes his home in Richmond, BC. While overlooking the warm up ring at the Cavan Indoor International Horse Show, I asked Trevor about the differences between the horse shows in Europe (Ireland particularly) and those we have at home in Canada.

Trevor spoke first about the efficiency of both the warm up and competition arenas: "As you witnessed yourself, nearly 100 horses go through in the space of an hour; and there are only 2 jumps [in the warm up ring] – one vertical and one oxer. You never see any arguing about who is next and who isn't. It just flows along, and that's because you have people that have done their training at home and they come here to jump 8-10 jumps and go in the ring."

The warm up ring system we are used to in Canada is quite a bit different. We normally have 5 jumps in a spacious warm up ring (or at least 3 in a busy indoor show), and the jumps rarely need to be shared with anyone else. In Europe sharing warm up jumps is the standard practice. The jump gets moved up or down, wider or narrower, after each horse has jumped it, so that the next horse can jump whatever they may need, before it gets adjusted yet again. It may seem hectic, but everyone appears comfortable with it and enters the ring prepared. Trevor added, "It works very smoothly. I think all the coaching should be done at home – there are far too many in North America trying to do [the training] at the horse show. There is enough pressure on the riders to get to the ring, it should be simplified at the horse show!"

Trevor's comment about the volume and rate of horses going through the competition ring had me take a second glance at the 'preloading' of horses into the competition ring. It was common to see three horses in the ring at any given time. This included the horse on course, the horse that had just completed its course as it walked out of the ring, and the next horse to go. The judges did not wait for the ring to be clear of one horse before ringing the bell for the next horse; quite the opposite, in fact, the bell rang almost immediately after the previous horse crossed the finish line. The announcer summarized the last round and announced the current horse, all while a horse was well into the course. The next horse would be in the ring walking or trotting around, giving the horse a chance to acclimatize to the ring of course, but more importantly so that they would be ready to start immediately when the horse on course finished.

In spite of the number of horses in the ring and the seemingly hurried ringing of the countdown bell, again no incident or issue arose. Everybody was very aware of staying out of the way of the horse on course and it seemed to give everybody a chance to show their horses around. Timeliness was of utmost importance, so being late or missing your spot at the in-gate was simply not possible. This particular show already carried on until almost midnight, so there was no time for waiting. On that note, nobody ever complained about competing so late either – it seemed normal to everybody!



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Since we were watching a Young Horse Final competition, I asked Trevor his thoughts on the differences in young horse competitions and producing young horses between Europe and at home. “The courses have so many variables [here]. You've got in-and-outs (combinations), coming out of corners to jumps, you've got liverpools. It's fantastic! The jumps are much, much bigger [than in North America] and there's nothing wrong with that.”

So there are some significant differences between showing in Europe and North America from the warm up to the competition ring. Is it likely we will change to a two-jump warm up ring system in North America? Probably not, but we could learn to be more agreeable to sharing, more efficient, and more timely in our warm up and competition process.