

How To Create The Stable And Mobile Body You Need

In this chapter you will learn how to incorporate both core stability and mobility work into your training. You will understand why one is rendered almost useless without the other and in some cases more dangerous. You will gain an insight into why we should mobilise before riding rather than just stretch. This chapter will also address the problem surrounding stiffness in the legs and better posture for a better seat.

Your Core-From The Home Gym To The Saddle



Many Equestrian Athletes (EA) often ask me what exercises they can use to be more stable and strong in the saddle, regardless of their competitive level, age or gender. You are no different. You will be using a combination of exercises that are the major (prime) movers of the joint and those that stabilise the joint. By using a progressive and specific set of exercises, in a structured sequence, you will increase strength and endurance in both the stabilisers and

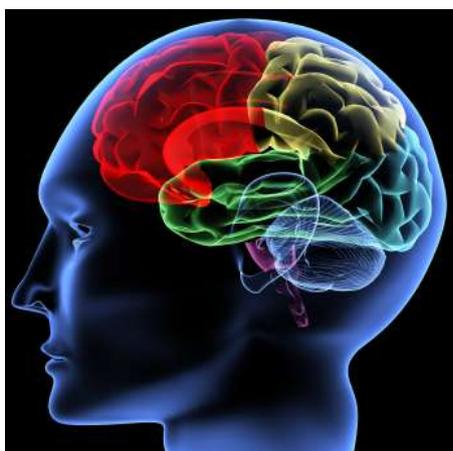
mobilisers.

The Stabilisers provide tone whereas the mobilisers tend to be the major muscle or assistant muscles in the mover. Good mobility will allow you to move the joint through the full ROM under control and, when coupled with strength, you have a stable and mobile EA.

By using these in isolation or neglecting one or other, you would be seriously limiting your potential to develop the riding fit body you are looking for. Now, once we have addressed the balanced programme, we need to make sure the exercises are functional.

Functional is a much debated word in the fitness profession, but my interpretation for the EA is this. Functional exercises could be described best as ones that mimic movements of the EA, whether it is on or off the horse, under similar energy demands. It really is as simple as that! Now you can see why the generic DVD or exercise class doesn't really cut it for the EA's specific set of needs.

It Is Not More Of One Than The Other



To get the riding fit body, it is about you striking a balance in your training between stability and mobility. By training in flexibility, strength and endurance you will find that your body's neuromuscular pathways (link between the brain and muscle) will be better developed and lead to a well balanced and healthy body.

Why is this balance so important?

A common problem faced by EA's is that in an effort to remain flexible they seek exercise routines that improve *only* flexibility. The trouble is this will not benefit you; this will actually put you at more risk. A flexible body and joint system with no support is as dangerous as tight muscles are. You could consider that you are essentially trying to fire a cannon from your canoe.



Think about the Eiffel tower as your spine. If I made all the small struts very flexible the main tower would become very unstable and vice versa. What you need to do is strengthen your muscles through their maximum range of movement. This will allow you to put your body into the positions you need to, safe in the knowledge that you are strong enough to get back to where you started, without pulling muscles because they can't cope with the strain.

Now obviously if you get into a position with relatively huge loads then this may change or if you use a poor technique to pick up that water bucket you do still put yourself at risk. It is very important to address mobility and stability equally and view them as part and parcel of a riding fit body.

Think Mobility Then Flexibility

A frequent topic surrounding equestrianism is the topic of stretching. This is largely due to the nature of the position we find ourselves in for the chosen event.



Many EA's find that they get stiff in the saddle and when it comes to getting off; well that's a whole new ball game for many. Regardless of whether you do feel stiff or not you need to consider stretching as both dynamic and static. I would encourage you to stretch dynamically prior to riding and after riding place more emphasis on the static stretches.

Dynamic is more applicable prior to riding as you maximise your power and strength whereas static stretches are more appropriate post riding and training to re-lengthen the worked muscles. The dynamic stretches can be considered mobility as they will tend to mobilise joints as well as take the muscle through its Range of Movement (ROM). The static stretches tend to work on lengthening the muscle fibres, with little attention to the joints.

In the programme you will be given mobility exercises that you can use prior to training or riding and a set of stretches that you can do post workout and riding. These will serve to keep you in optimal alignment and prevent the stiffness of over-worked muscles you may have experienced before.

Getting Warm For The Saddle

As the awareness of being riding fit has increased in recent times, many EAs ask me how they can warm up to ride for whatever equestrian event they choose. The key to warming up for you is to think of the warm up as a dynamic set of movements that are going to warm, mobilise and prepare your body and mind for your event.

I will provide you with specific mobility circuits that you will follow for your training programme. This has worked really well for all of my EA's prior to riding as well. What you are looking for are movements that involve the ankle, knee, hip, shoulder and elbow.

These movements will involve rotation of the core, flexion and extension of the spine and joints mentioned above. What we need to achieve is working the joints through the range of movement (ROM) that is needed for when you ride.

The other purposes of the warm up are to elevate the heart rate and also prepare the mind for the task ahead. Just bear in mind before you get into your warm up that you need to be fully focused on getting ready for the event ahead. Remember that equestrianism is a sport, and in all other sports, they warm up to prepare physically and mentally for the task ahead.

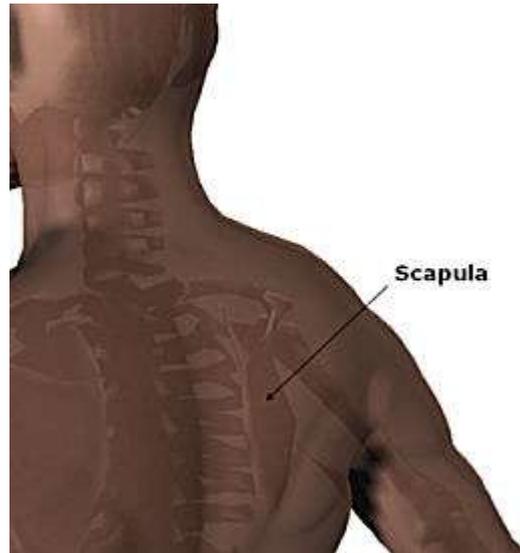


Better Posture, Better Seat

Ok, so as an EA I am pretty sure that you would love to know how you can help your posture to give you a more comfortable and effective riding position.

Throughout the book and during the training programme we will be discussing and using a series of exercises that will bring about optimal alignment for you. The problem often lies with rounded shoulders, even if it is not overly obvious most of us have slight internal rotation of the shoulder which causes

our shoulder blades (scapula) to part in the middle. We refer to this as scapula winging. The problem is that over time it will be made worse as the seated position increases postural stress. What a lot of people make the mistake of doing is focusing solely upon upper-body work, in particular the front of the core, to correct posture. I will help you to avoid this by addressing the whole of the posterior chain.



The posterior chain describes the group of muscles and fascia (connective tissue) that makes up the back of our body. The efficient and effective movement of the posterior chain relies on neurological transmission of signals (from the brain) through the fascia to these muscles. If you have some postural weaknesses or deficiencies here, you will never move well and ultimately will never have the strong posture you are looking for.

For that reason, we will address posture very holistically, training the gluteals (buttocks) to work in synchrony with the hamstrings and lower back. We will also work on opening up the chest and pulling the shoulder blades down and back to give ourselves a very confident appearance.

Limbering Up The Legs

The reason for your legs stiffening after or during riding is due to the demands placed on them. The demands of the riding position result in tight hip flexors and adductors. To alleviate some of these problems it is essential that you warm up, using the mobility circuits and stretch post riding and workout as we mentioned earlier. It is also worth considering your nutrition at this point.



We will cover energy and endurance later in the book, but, if you are dehydrated your muscles will fatigue far quicker and you simply won't be able to deliver energy to them and remove the waste products of exercise. If you have been drinking caffeine, which remember is a diuretic; you are leaving yourself wide open to getting cramps and stiffness of the lower leg and hips.

You may be running your petrol engine on diesel!!

If you have been eating foods high in sugar, this will increase the acidity of your blood and further increase the likelihood of cramp or stiffness. I want you to be both stable and mobile in the saddle. You can train as much as you like, train your horse as much as you like, but if you are running your Ferrari on diesel it will break down (get stiff and injured) very quickly.

By using exercises that open up the hip and lengthen the short hip flexors (on the front of the hip) you will develop and maintain excellent hip mobility. Also, by mobilising the ankle joint you will lessen the compression in the joint. This is so important to all EA's, due to the ROM needed about the ankle for rising or sitting trot, canter and for that matter every phase and transition.

I hope you now have a clearer idea of how we will use mobility and stretching to help you achieve optimal alignment for your seat position. You should also be aware of which muscles need stretching and which joints need mobilising to keep your body in equilibrium. By mobilising and warming up before riding you will now feel completely different when you jump off. We must strike the balance between stability and mobility.

Time Is On The Mind

In this chapter we will address the biggest problem faced by all EA's. The chapter lays out a strategy for you to manage your time more efficiently and ultimately get more done, with less stress. Within the chapter I explain how the shorter workouts will take your fitness to another level, inform you of why you no longer need to go to the gym and illustrate how you can be efficient in terms of the workout time and exercises with the biggest bang for their buck.



This Time It Will Be Different

This programme will enable you to achieve results that you have never achieved before in 30 minutes per day. But how will this be different than before?

Because the training is so manageable you will actually look forward to the challenge rather than find it a hindrance. The training will become part of your lifestyle and you will wonder how you did not have time before. You see, all the other generic programmes out there may have consisted of trips to the gym, long runs, long cycles, which all stress the time element of the EA. Not in the EAP!

You will use a specific series of metabolic circuits for the legs and upper body that specifically target the muscles and joints in the way you use them on your horse. There are also mobility circuits, flexibility exercises and core stability and you can do it all in your home if you wish.

Previous programmes tended to add stress before removing it. They were generally all about adding more volume to your already busy life. This programme actually removes certain stressors before adding exercise. The initial assessment addresses postural and nutritional stress before we remove the extra stress of your previous workout routine. Because of its specificity this helps you to remove a lot of the junk that was previously in your training and your life. Training like this will revolutionise the way you think about training yourself to achieve the best on your horse every single time you ride.

Here's The Information You have Been Looking For

For a long time EA's like you have been crying out for information on how to get riding fit. Unfortunately, this level of information has never been released into the equestrian field before, and never in a way that can be so easily implemented into a weekly programme.

The problem up to now is that this information has been written in hard to read formats, that really rely on you picking that book up every time and there's no one there to support you through the programme. All the information you need to be in the best possible shape is right here in this book.

Up to now, EA's have had to trawl forums, read articles in magazines, and read books that just don't flick that switch. The generic nature of the information up to now has meant that other sports haven't taken EA's seriously, and until the level of information changes this won't change either. This in turn has led to EA's feeling 'is that necessary', 'I haven't got time' or 'I don't need to do that to get fit to ride'.

Well let me tell them (the other sports), equestrians are athletes and should be treated so, no matter their level. Equestrian is a sport and you are an athlete!

Shorter Workouts Save You Time And Take Your Fitness To New Levels

By making the workouts shorter this removes a number of stresses on the EA. Most notably time, but importantly for EA the psychological impact of a shorter workout makes it all seem more manageable. The EA that has a feeling of self-control and organisation is the one that will be successful on the day of the event. Being able to think clearly before your event, will enable you to effectively visualise finishing the course or the race and ultimately see yourself being successful. Helping you to focus on the positives and blocking out the negatives.

With training in shorter bursts, this allows the EA to reach the lactate threshold (LT). This is the point at which the body can no longer use oxygen to supply the working muscles. It is important to train in and around the LT as when the going gets tough and breathing becomes heavy; you need to be able to buffer the lactic acid that you have produced. Being more efficient at this will enable you to go back to using oxygen more quickly and ultimately get your breath back. In training this fashion you will reach levels that they would never be able to achieve in a one hour workout that is at one pace, such as a jog.

The interval based approach helps the EA to maintain muscle mass and reduce body fat, due to the 'after burn'. The after burn is a term used to describe how energy is still being paid back after the actual training session finishes.

The periods of work and rest allow the athlete work hard and then recover, this undulating level of intensity enables the intensity to stay high, but also prevents needless time spent accumulating junk miles on the road or in the gym.

By using the very same S-T-A-B-L-E Training Systems that I use with my equestrian athletes your body will often take the blood from the top of the body to the lower, in an alternating fashion. This will challenge the hearts ability to deliver oxygen to all the muscles needed during your chosen equestrian discipline.

Exercise With The Weekend In Mind

Many equestrian athletes worry that they will train too hard in the week leading up to the event, meaning that they are tired on the day and can't perform optimally. This is totally understandable as it does not matter if your event is social or competitive you still want to achieve the best you can right? This is where other programmes demonstrate a lack of knowledge around the EA.

Many EA ask me what exercises they should do. It's not just about the exercises; it is about the structure and order of the exercises. The EAP has been designed to allow you to recover before the weekend event, with the Metabolic Circuits in the early and middle part of the week and mobility and core work in the later part.

I find that then, the mindset of the EA changes to, what exercises are best for optimal performance at the weekend? The individual exercises take care of themselves when they are in a structure that is specific to the EA.

Don't Waste Time Travelling

Much of the problem around previous generic exercise programmes that EA's have followed was based around the need for extensive gym machinery and equipment. The EAP is based around a home programme (the gym is ok, but optional) that you can use minimal, simple but highly effective training equipment.

The trouble up to now has been that many of the pieces of equipment have been used as if they were in a circus act or required vast amounts of space. The EAP is structured and designed using the most effective and efficient techniques that simulate exactly what you need to succeed.

Part of the reason is time based, but the other reasoning includes the fact that I don't want equestrians doing what the general public are doing. For example in many commercial gyms you will see folk just sat around on machines, chatting for 5 minutes between sets. Time is of the essence and you don't want people distracting you from your goal and sapping up your valuable time.



I strongly believe that the most effective exercises can easily be done at home, so why not make use of that space and save yourself the gym membership? By using the specific exercises in the programme it will become very clear to you that your home is your playground and that great results can be achieved there, provided you stick with the programme and don't let anything get in the way.

By using your own bodyweight you will become very efficient at using this, and introducing bands and dumbbells will take things to the next level for you and your performance on the horse.

Just because you are using dumbbells doesn't mean that you are going to get huge muscle growth. The loads that we will be using won't be heavy enough, although you may see muscle definition occurring as you become stronger and leaner.

Efficiency Is Key



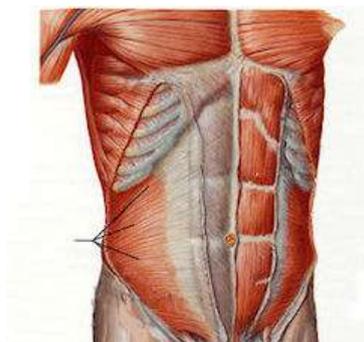
The best exercises are often the ones that provide most energy output in the shortest time or biggest bang for your buck if you like. Multi joint exercises involving the ankle, knee, hip, shoulder and elbow are excellent exercises for the EA, because all of these are involved whenever you ride.

The EA should be looking for exercises that look like the way they ride or the position they may find themselves in, even if it's not the whole time. The combination of high intensity exercise with core based exercise works really well, as my EA's then develop the ability to engage the core muscles whilst breathing heavily, which we all do at some stage during our event.

The high intensity exercises are the ones that tend to use the large muscles of the legs and gluteals. This is due to the high demand for energy when these are asked to work. Having said that, the EA needs to make sure that not only they are doing the right exercise, but also that they are using the right muscles to do this exercise.

What do I mean?

Well, because many EA's spend a long time in the saddle, when they come to walk or exercise they are very dominant in the quadriceps and lower back, due to the position in the saddle. It essentially ends up telling those muscles that they must work all the time. This is a problem as the opposite muscles; the gluteals and abdominals are effectively switched off and neurologically fall asleep.



In the EAP I have given you a specific mobility circuit to use that will wake the sleepy gluteals and abdominals up and release off the tight hip flexors and lower back muscles.

Bottom line here is that the best exercises are the ones that mimic the movements you do when you are on the horse with a high level of intensity.

Fitting It In

Many EA's, like you, have told me previously that they have struggled to fit the long, arduous sessions into their day. The EAP has that covered.

It was very easy for me to see how the generic, 'out of a magazine programme' didn't work for the EA when they needed it most.

Why?

Simply because they took too long! But deeper than that, they were boring, didn't necessarily produce results that stood out and interfered far too much with daily routines and schedules.

Ideally I encourage my EA to train first thing in the day, because this is when their metabolism is at its highest but more than that, it's before the rest of the day can affect your schedule. So rather than thinking, 'I will do that after work' or 'I will do that after I finish at the yard', then something happens to one of the horses or the farrier is late (I know what they are like) and disrupts the rest of your day, get it done as early as possible. I know that it is not possible every day and everyone is an individual, but do you see where I am going with this.

The more 'stuff' that can crop up between the minute you wake up, the more potential there is for something to throw you off track and risk missing your training that you and your horse will be relying on in the months to come.

Simple things have worked really well, for example

- Getting up 30 minutes earlier
- Preparing lunch the night before
- Popping tea in the slow cooker ready for the next evening meal if you know you have a busy day tomorrow
- Watch 20 minutes less TV
- Don't read the magazine so frequently during the day
- Spend less time chatting to people at the yard.... I think you get the picture here.

Thirty minutes or less in some cases is not a huge amount of time to give yourself, in the quest to becoming riding fit.

All that aside, as mentioned above it really is an individual thing, so find what works best for you, and go for it. Perhaps the biggest thing is to get your diary organised, find out when you have free time, and actually use it.

By filling in the below table, you can easily plan out your whole week to see when it is that you will have time to train. All you need to do is complete the form by adding in the words SLEEP, EAT, WORK and RELAX in the relevant time slots.

When you've done this, you'll find you then have a pile of free slots where you can decide at what times on each day you can potentially train. As soon as that's done, fill in those gaps. This will by no means be an exclusive 'you must do this at this time' schedule, but it'll serve to give you a great idea of how much free time you actually have, or can make.

Weekly Schedule

<i>Time</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>5-6</i>							
<i>6-7</i>							
<i>7-8</i>							
<i>8-9</i>							
<i>9-10</i>							
<i>10-11</i>							
<i>11-12</i>							
<i>12-1</i>							
<i>1-2</i>							
<i>2-3</i>							
<i>3-4</i>							
<i>4-5</i>							
<i>5-6</i>							
<i>6-7</i>							
<i>7-8</i>							
<i>8-10</i>							

Interval Train For Maximum Gain

The main reason that the EA hasn't had a specific programme up to now is largely due to the slow steady state nature of the programme design. This was in no way specific to the EA; it rarely took them to the level that should have gone to. Periods of work and rest are commonly known as intervals. As a rider, I am confident that even if you didn't realise it, you have been doing this with your horse.

The EA actually knows about interval training it's just it has never been laid out for them in a specific and structured fashion by an exercise and fitness professional before. The work periods allow you to take your level of intensity beyond that of the steady state slow exercise you may have engaged in previously. Not only that, it will help you preserve muscle mass and shed any body fat you may have.



Now this is not a fat loss programme by any means, but one of the principles of fat loss lies with intervals, so expect to maintain your muscle mass and lose body fat by engaging 100% with the whole EAP. The rest allows you to keep the technique quality high and also teaches the muscles to train in the way you want them to. This is contrary to becoming over fatigued and ultimately losing your technique which is

often the case when exercising for a long time.

The steady state exercise component has a place at the end of sessions for those clients who wish for fat loss, but in regards to the EA, it's not the most efficient method of getting specific fitness and the riding fit body you are looking for. It really is no secret that interval training for whatever sport you choose is the most efficient way to produce huge gains, so the EA is no different in that respect.

Ok, so this has been cracking chapter don't you think?

We looked at time management and how we can save time in different areas; you will also have gained an insight into how to plan your day so nothing gets left out. The major worry for most is of the weekend's efforts being hampered by the training in the week. You now know that this is taken care of with the specific nature of the programme design. You will have a better idea of why you and other EA's need to think of interval training to get maximal gain, saving you time and making you more efficient on and off the horse.

Why You Will Be Assessing, Not Guessing For Your Core

In this chapter you will be shown how to assess your core and know how the results are currently affecting you and most importantly what you can do about it. The chapter also outlines some of the key principles you need to adhere to and reasons why sit ups are banned from this moment onwards. Not only will you know this but you will also find out why the generic gym classes you have been going to just haven't cut it.



That Feeling Of A Bullet Proof Core



The big mistake that many people make initially is to lift weights or do core exercises that are far too demanding and require a higher skill level than they currently have. In the quest to build a stronger core they go flying out of their start box, chasing the picture they have seen on the front of the latest magazine.

Within the EAP we will be concentrating largely on stability in the early part of the training, making sure all the small muscles are activated and fully engaged, keeping your pelvis and spine in a neutral position.

You will then move to a core-conditioning phase where you will place demands on the core to switch on and provide support when it begins to fatigue. This is known as muscular endurance training.

Finally, you will move to a strengthening phase where we increase the loading demand on core and ultimately using this new core strength when you are breathing hard just like your event.

The exercises will address all areas of the core, not just the front; this is a common mistake that many members of the general public and EA's have made up to now! We will be focusing on the exercises that create a strong core from the inside out, not just the superficial, "show" muscles.

A mixture of fixation, lateral flexion, forward flexion, extension and rotation will give the EA the riding fit core that he or she needs!

You, the EA will be training for GO not SHOW! Remember that those who 'go' well generally 'show' very well. This is seen with your horses as well, if the horse has been well trained, it will have a great top line and its coat will shine as a result of good quality nutrition.

The same goes for you, the EA. Train well and eat well and you too will go well!

Sit Ups Are Ruining Your Seat

Stop doing sit ups!

Why?



Every time you do a sit up (traditional sit up) you activate your hip flexors. Remember that these are the muscles that pull the upper thigh closer to the body. Now there's nothing wrong with



training these muscles to do exactly that, but when it comes to training the abdominal muscles for improved posture, function and a flatter stomach there's far more effective exercises.

The pull of tighter, over active (facilitated) hip flexors as a result of too many sit ups results in a pull forward of the pelvis. This can be compared to emptying the contents of your torso onto the floor as if you were emptying the bucket of water you washed your car with. This in turn means that now your Gluteals become underactive (inhibited). This is a big problem for the EA because these are a big muscle group that require lots of energy to perform many whole body exercises and are crucial in keeping a strong and healthy back. If the gluteals aren't working then you are reducing the quality and 'bang for your buck' that you get from your training.

Imagine you hadn't signed up for the EAP. You may have gone off and done all those sit ups, your pelvic alignment would have been further affected by the over and underactive muscles you have created. Worst of all, your seat hasn't improved, your back pain may have worsened and your stomach looks bigger! Not great, huh?

Added to this you have the compressive forces placed on the lower back through performing multiple sit ups and you run the risk of a repetitive strain injury through over used muscles and poor body mechanics.



Assessing Not Guessing

As you most probably already know, good posture is fundamental to your riding success. I would encourage you to look at your posture as you would look at your horses. Start from the ground up and consider that saying 'no foot, no horse'. This is so true for the EA as well, if your foundations and the pillar of your strength is weakened then you will always struggle to get the riding fit body you deserve.

I have designed the programme in such a way that you will work on your posture integrated with in the programme to correct imbalances. For this reason it is extremely important that you complete all the exercises and don't pick and choose the ones you like.

Here is how I want you to assess your posture.

Please wear a pair of shorts and a sports bra if you are female or topless if you are male. I would like you to be bare foot for the whole posture assessment. Remember that this assessment is subjective and performed at home by yourself. If you would like a more detailed assessment, you should seek the advice of a well trained exercise professional. There is a video of this assessment process in the Video Links section of the EAP Training Manual.

Wall Standing Test

Here I would like you to stand against a wall, with your heels touching the wall. Now place one hand directly in the natural curve of your lumbar spine (lower back), with the palm facing the wall.

Which of these best describes how your hand feels in that curve of the lower back?

1. Does the widest part of your hand fit into the gap with the palm lightly touching both the wall and lower back?
 2. Does the hand feel squashed against the wall and the lower back?
- Or
3. Does the hand feel like it has daylight between itself and the wall?

If the answer is number 1 that's great, your pelvis is in a neutral position. If however, it is described best by number 2 then it is likely that you have a posterior tilt. If you find yourself at number 3 you are likely to have an anterior tilt of the pelvis, this is like many of the EA's that I meet. Whichever one it is don't worry, the EAP will create the riding fit body you need to make the very most out of your horse.

Front Of Mirror – Plumb Line Test

Feet Arches

Firstly I would like you to stand in front of a full-length mirror. Stand with the feet square and look at the feet. I want you to see if the arches of your feet fall in?

That is easily established by imagining trying to get one of your thumbs under the arch, if you can then that's great. If not don't worry we will be working on the gluteals and we will be stretching out your calves to make sure this doesn't affect your hip mobility any longer.

Alignment of Pelvis-

The next major area is the pelvis. I want you to feel for the two bony processes on the front of the hip otherwise known as the ASIS (anterior superior iliac spine). I want you to decide if these are level or not? Now I want you to feel for the Posterior Superior Iliac Spine (PSIS), these are the highest point on the back of the pelvis. Place the index finger on the front part of the pelvis and the thumb on the back part. Are these level?

If they are that is fantastic. Again, if not don't panic, I see this all the time with my EA's when they come for their first assessment. It is easily addressed through the specific mobility and stability exercises I have in the plan for you. The main issue with having an imbalanced pelvis is that the EA will then tend to have an uneven weight distribution in their seat and tend to put more pressure through one stirrup, causing the horse to favour one side.

Thumb and 1

I want you to take a look at your hands as you look directly at the mirror. What can you see?

Can you see one thumb and the index (first finger)?

Or can you see more?

Can you see the thumb, 1st finger and second finger?

Or even the back of the hand?

Again don't worry too much about what the result is now, just make a note right now of what you can see or better still, ask someone to take a picture. If you can see more than the thumb and first finger you will no doubt have internal shoulder rotation which is typically described as rounded shoulders. By having rounded shoulders as an EA, this will affect your posture, particularly when you get tired, giving you that really rounded posture that you may have seen before. The programme has plenty of exercises within it that will alleviate these issues and aim to stabilise the shoulder blades into a position that will give you a great posture both in and out of the saddle.

Shoulders

Nice and simple this one. Is one shoulder higher than the other?

If not, fantastic, let's keep it that way. Once again, don't panic if not we just need to make sure we stretch out the neck and shoulder muscles, which take a lot of force when we ride. I have provided you with a video of all the post workout stretches you need to do to help you get the riding fit body you are striving for.

Assessing Will Improve Longevity In The Saddle

As an EA, having and being able to maintain good posture and alignment is essential to ensuring that you perform at your best. Poor posture, alignment and muscle imbalances are the result of poor use. This causes misalignment of joints and tissues will lead to energy leakage, injury and subsequent poor performances on and off of your horse. When poor postures are adopted, abnormal loads are placed on your joints, muscles and connective tissues, which can manifest itself as pain particularly in lower back for the EA.

Your muscles actually act to pump fluid through your body, and poor posture often leads to your muscles not being able to pump fluids around the body.

When you have poor posture, you'll find that some muscles become short, tight and hyperactive (they work too much, often when they shouldn't be). A prime example of this is your Upper Trapezius (the 'shrugging' muscles), which are often extremely tight in anyone who spends his or her day sat at a desk or suffers from any type of stress.



Opposite of these tight muscles are going to be muscles that have become long, weak and lazy. A major example of this is the gluteals, which become elongated and lazy through the 'sitting' lifestyle, and thus cause other muscles to have to work harder to make up for their laziness. Having good posture on the other hand, helps to keep your muscles in balance and your body in good alignment, which subsequently allows the various systems within your body to function efficiently.

Typically, the EA often ends up with rounded shoulders, tight hips, weak gluteals and tight lower backs. These issues are not only due to their work and riding but also activities of daily living. Sitting down at work, sitting in the car and the seat position on the horse, regardless of the style or event competed in, all have a massive impact on the way in which your body looks, feels and performs. These common traits foster a poor posture, which leads to inefficient performances in everyday life and on the horse.

Think of your posture as the chassis of a car.

If the chassis is damaged, the car doesn't drive right. It uses more fuel; it becomes more prone to breaking down, and eventually will break. In the case of the EA, if your posture is poor, you'll become fatigued quickly. Your movement patterns some become poor, leading to compensations from other muscles. Subsequently injury will follow and eventually your body tells you it's time to stop doing what you're doing. For some EA's this will be early on

in the event or at the end when they are most fatigued.

Maybe comparing posture to a lame horse is more relevant to the EA.

If your horse has an abscess and you head out for a ride, the horse will not be sound and the ride or event will soon end and you will be heading home. The same applies to you and your posture. If your posture is not optimal then the other components will be stressed and break.

During the EAP, you will be performing movement patterns to help increase hip mobility, and bring you out of the seated posture. Included are movements to bring your shoulders back to get rid of that roundness that you may have right now, as well as some specific work to make sure that your gluteals are firing up properly.

Assessing your posture is essential to improving performance and longevity in the saddle.

By taking a check on your posture and fitness levels at the start of the programme, you are assessing not guessing.

The aim of the assessment is to measure your progress through the programme and allow you to work on your individual weaknesses. This is not only to improve your fitness levels but also to keep you riding fit for longer. The assessment combines parts of the Kinetic Chain Assessment designed by leading health and Exercise Coach, and mentor of mine, Dax Moy and those of the assessment used by my very own EA's.



This allows me to lay out the process of the assessment for you, the EA, so that you too can begin your quest for the riding fit body in the very best way. There is a mixture of static and dynamic tests that will allow you to measure your success throughout the programme.

Included within this are inner range holds that will identify the weakness of certain joint structures and dynamic movements that allow you to see how your body moves when performing basic movement patterns. I strongly advise that you take pictures of yourself at the start as this is a fantastic tool come the end of the programme to see how you have changed, you won't believe your eyes. It is also another way of measuring your success and keeping yourself accountable.

Those generic programmes that you may have followed before may have left you in the situation where you are essentially left firing your cannon from a canoe. By this I mean they gave you strength you couldn't use because your core, the pillar of your strength was unstable. I wouldn't mind betting that there would have been very little in terms of progression and specificity. By this I mean they essentially have you trying to throw something that you can't handle.

The Core Is Keeping You On

Many EA's want to know if the programme involves sit-ups. The answer is NO! To get a strong core that is beneficial to your performance and health, believe me there are far more effective exercises.

Remember that your core is the musculature that connects your upper and lower body, and serves to stabilize and control the area between your ribs and your knees, specifically covering your lumbar spine and your hips.

Because of what and where it is, the core is responsible for linking movements that involve the upper and lower body working together which is so important when you get tired at the end of your event. If your core isn't strong and stable enough, it won't sufficiently and effectively enable you to transfer power.

Many EA's and their instructors/coaches feel that the major limiting factor in a rider's success is in the quality of their athlete's strength, impulsion and seat position. This is down to lack of useable strength in the major muscles involved in those positions, such as your latissimus dorsi (the big back muscle under arm pit).

One of my mentors, and world-renowned strength and conditioning coach, Juan Carlos Santana provides a great example of this in his book, *The Essence of Programme Design*. He explains how your latissimus dorsi are connected to your Humerus (upper arm) and right down to the top of your Ilium at the hip. If the 'latts' pull on a weak and unstable core, the core will either end up injured, or your body will protect its core by neurally inhibiting the force that the latts produce. In other words, they won't work as hard or efficiently as they're supposed to.



In the program there are no sit-up exercises. These are largely ineffective 'core training' exercises for the EA and would further add the poor postures generally adopted in later stages of x country and race riding (to name but a few) , as well as the effect that predominantly riding has on the shape and look of your body (rounded shoulders and excessively arched lower back).

You'll be training the core the way it needs to be trained to ensure that you are able to generate the movements of equestrianism efficiently and effectively. In terms of training the rotational elements of equestrianism, the program focuses on implementing training around something called the 'serape effect'. Without going into masses of detail, this concept serves to emphasise the point that the muscles of the core are 'connectors' connecting upper and lower body.

The serape is a scarf-like garment worn by natives in South America and Mexico, which is draped around the neck and shoulders, crosses near the waist, and then tucks into the belt area.



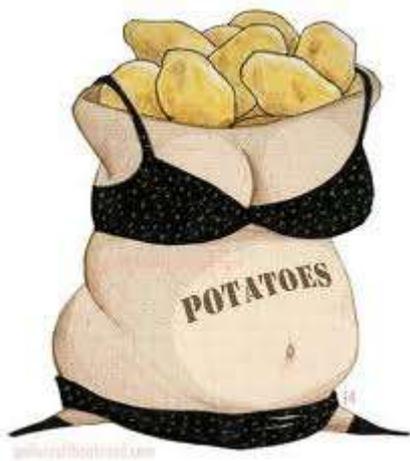
The serape image above illustrates the muscular cross wiring that lends itself to allow the body to provide rotational power. The anatomical design here demonstrates the rotational force production relationship between shoulder and opposite hip. This is one of the major reasons that much of the core training you will perform on your quest to become an EA, will involve plenty of rotational exercises in order to train this serape effect, and ensure that when your core is required to generate power and translate this through the limbs, it doesn't end up like you're firing a cannon from a canoe!

Generic Fitness For The Equestrian Athlete Is A Thing Of The Past

The chosen method of core training for the EA has traditionally been Pilates. Now, there is nothing wrong with Pilates at all, but it just hasn't been fully solving the problem for the EA.

Why?

Well, when the EA gets put under stress and this stress is seen in demanding phases of the EA's chosen event, the core muscles are not adapted to being used when breathing has been elevated to that level. The EA has not previously conditioned the core in a way that simulates the way their body works during an event, hence why so many people finish their X country round with far poorer posture than when they start. Some even describe their posture resembling that of a sack of potatoes!



A lot of EA's actually switch from the diaphragmatic breathing they use during Pilates to breathing through the stomach. This becomes a problem as they lose all the intra-abdominal pressure they need to keep them strong at times of need, hence that folded position on the horse. The intra abdominal pressure is what keeps the spine fixated and prevents unwanted movement.

Think of the impact this has on your seat position and ultimately the strain you are placing on your horse late in the event or day. What we need to do, as EA's is to train the core to have excellent endurance then couple it with specific cardiovascular exercises so that we can practice the situation before it arises again on 'event day'.

This will build you the core you need to be riding fit, not generally fit like the rest of the population.

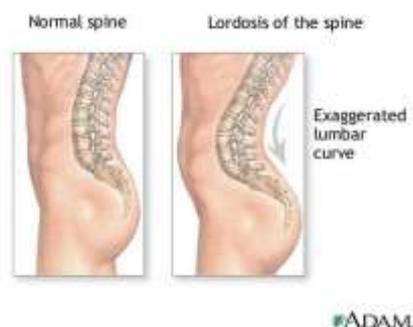
Wow, that was a cracker of a chapter. Who would have thought that a scarf and the way in which someone wore it could explain so much about the way we operate as human beings and EA's. I hope you now fully appreciate why generic exercise classes just don't suit the EA and that assessment is a vital tool in us addressing how to work on our weaknesses and increase longevity in the saddle.

How to Create Your Saddle Strong Back

In 1996, a questionnaire on riding injuries revealed that 48% of riders suffered from lower back pain (Bird&Quinn). For this reason, the back health of the EA something I have faced every day as an equestrian athlete performance coach. This chapter will perhaps create a few light bulb moments for you; you will know which exercises to avoid, which exercises to use and how the core can be addressed to make daily tasks that bit easier. Let's get started by being proactive.

Proactive Back Care

As you can see this is a major problem within the Equestrian field as so many EA suffer from lower back pain regardless of age or gender. This is frustrating for the instructor, the athlete and employers. Instructors can't take their clients where they wanted to because they get lower back pain early in the lesson; the EA can't finish their lesson, so wastes money on the lesson and then on treatments. The EA's employers also become increasingly frustrated with the fact that their employee is off sick or can only perform limited duties. How can we prevent this?



Because of a lack of strength in the gluteals, the pelvis easily slips into the anterior tilt, where the muscles of the lower back shorten and the hip flexors tighten up and pull the pelvis forward.

By using the gluteal (glutes/buttock) strengthening exercises in combination with thoracic spine (upper back) and hip mobility exercises you will be well on your way to preventing injuries to the lower back. These are essential together as a mobilised spine without strength is dangerous. We must create a strong, supple back and pelvic region.

It's also important to remember that when training the back we engage the gluteals to provide support. This will also improve the neural pathways and prevent compression of the nerves to the lower leg due to an over worked lower back.

It is worth knowing that sitting trot would be a compressive factor on the lumbar and sacral spine. This obviously doesn't mean you will not do them, obviously you will (if they are

needed in your event), but if we know how to counteract this with the specific exercises within the programme then you are more empowered to take control of your long-term health.

Make Light Work Of The Water Buckets

Many EA's are really interested in developing upper body strength so they don't feel like their arms are being pulled out. I love to see the EA get great gains from upper body strength training on my EA programmes. What we have to consider is how we can address this in the most specific manner.



You need to develop a balanced upper body that can push, pull and rotate under control. The EAP covers all of the needs of EA in terms of the specific movement patterns required.

The routines address pulling and pushing from all the angles and rotation of the upper body through thoracic (upper back) mobility exercises and fixation exercises that prevent any unwanted rotation. In the programme is an element of rotation with the resistance needed to develop strength and stability you can use on and off the horse.

It's worth remembering that whilst you will get stronger through the programme, you will also become more powerful. When you can produce more force with more speed, power is inevitable. Power is also defined as work divided by time. What we will see is that you be able to perform more work in the same amount of time and/or the same amount of work in less time. This is important, not only on the horse but off of it as well.

Avoid These Like The Plague

Many EA's who have suffered from lower back pain do not want to go back to that place ever again. I can totally understand that and I would never wish that pain upon anyone. As I mentioned earlier, without proper gluteal (glutes/buttock) function when extending the spine will lead to the lower back taking most of the strain. That is why I will teach you how to engage (wake them up) and strengthen the gluteals first.

Now whilst you are on this programme you will be staying well clear of crunches and traditional sit-ups. These exercises are very compressive on the lumbar spine and many EA's make the mistake of thinking that they will strengthen the core to eliminate back pain.

But you know what, you are not all wrong, you do need to strengthen the core but these exercises place huge strain and compression on the lower back, and ultimately don't eliminate lower back pain, they make them worse. Here's a study for you that illustrates this beautifully,

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the US has set the action limit for low back compression at 3,300 Newton's (about 730lbs). Repetitive loading above this level is associated with higher injury rates in workers. Guess how much compressive force is put through the spine when performing sit-ups. That's right 3,300 Newton's! Although they might seem like a good idea, sit-ups are a big "no-no" with people suffering with low back pain. To be honest none of my clients, EA or general public will ever do a sit up or crunch regardless of whether they currently suffer from back pain or not.

If you suffer with low back pain, you want to first create stability then build endurance. Just off the top of my head, I can think of about 30 exercises I would choose for you rather than sit ups and crunches to train you for optimal core stability, strength and endurance.

Prevention Is Better Than Cure



For those EA's that have lower back pain, and for that matter those EA's who don't, the big question that often comes up is, how can I prevent lower back stiffness?

Lower back pain as you saw earlier is due to a combination of factors and muscle imbalances. I encourage all of my EA Personal Training clients to follow the same specific mobility and flexibility circuits as outlined in the EAP. This will help you to focus on obtaining adequate hip function, lateral flexion and thoracic mobility.

If you have poor hip function you will struggle to engage the gluteals and may at later stages suffer from cramp and tightness around the front and side of the hip. When it comes to lateral flexion, this refers to when you bend sideways; if you lack flexibility and endurance here you will suffer from poor lateral and rotational strength and subsequently poor core stability. Insufficient thoracic mobility often manifests itself in the lower back, but by paying attention to this area, you will maintain the posture you need to for longer periods and they will be pain free.

To really give yourself the best chance of being pain free you need to adequately hydrate. I recommend drinking 1 litre per 50lbs of body weight. I would also strongly suggest that you are eating plenty of foods high in magnesium and zinc as if you get tight (facilitated) muscles you will use lots of magnesium as this is used in muscle contraction and relaxation. Foods

such as spinach and broccoli are great. Getting to bed by 10pm will help to minimise the negative effects of increased cortisol levels as a result of a stiff lower back.

If you have suffered from a stiff lower back for a while you will have a slightly altered circadian rhythm (daily body processes), which will also have had an effect on cortisol levels. Ensuring you get enough fish oil into your diet will maximise the anti-inflammatory processes occurring in your body. You may also wish to consider the role of vitamin C and B-complex vitamins in helping to restore connective tissue and maintaining its health.

In normal circumstances, i.e. when you haven't got back pain from riding, the cortisol will actually stimulate the brain. However when the cortisol levels are excessively high for extended amounts of time (i.e. when you have had a bad back for a while) your brain function becomes foggy and this is the last thing you want when you are trying to compete and enjoy time doing the thing that is after all your passion.

Back Pain Explained

The anterior tilt associated with spending long periods of time seated, will contribute to lower back pain. But on from the tight muscles of the lumbar and hip flexors, we have weak and long abdominal and gluteals, that need to be addressed.

Remember that all of the muscles of the lower back have a nerve supply and if these are compressed by tight muscles and subsequently reduced joint mobility neural compression. This is otherwise and more commonly known as entrapment. This is caused by inflammation from trauma or tight muscles, and results in reduced blood flow and pain is likely to occur due to trigger sensations.



This happens because of excessive time spent in one position. Unfortunately those nerves that supply the muscles of the legs and gluteals are getting trapped, weakening the muscles and the forces that these can achieve. This will lead to premature fatigue and weakness when you need it most.

For a lot of EA's this nerve compression will also explain some the calf cramps experienced during the event or ride and/or post event. With poor ankle mobility often simultaneously present, the problem is made worse.

So we will focus on stretches and mobility of the whole of the posterior chain. The posterior chain describes all of the muscles and fascia that run up the back (posterior) side of our body and the way in which they are connected to help us to move and function well. This is so important for you to improve the quality of your ride and the longevity of your career or hobby, regardless of whether you currently suffer from back pain or if not (I want to keep it that way).

There's More To It Than Just The Back

A lot of EA's ask me if they need to train their back muscles to get a great posture. If this were the case they would not have to worry about the lower half of their body or stretching the tight muscles on the front of the hips and shoulders. The muscles on the anterior (front) part of the shoulder are often tight due to a rounded posture and this results in long and weak upper back muscles that help us to pull.

So whilst these muscles are absolutely essential for keeping a contact and overall control of the horse, we need to address much more than just the pulling muscles to get a great posture for our equestrian event, no matter whether it better dressage, x-country, racing or hunting.

It really is more about optimal pelvic alignment and inhibition (switching off) of the muscles in the lower back and lumbar spine. The lower back is not weak; instead, in most cases it is over active. The EAP will focus on the muscles of trunk and torso through muscular strength and endurance initially, and then when you the EA can stabilise and have endurance, we can think about loading the spine, using dumbbells.

When it comes to training the back it is very important to consider the serape effect again.



To see this, I want you to stand in front of the mirror wearing a loose t-shirt, as soon as you finish reading. I want you to mimic the running action. You will see the lines or creases in your t-shirt; this is a great illustration of the diagonal relationship between the shoulders and hips.

The relationship between the upper back and hips is integral to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the EA's performance. For this reason we will use specific exercises that integrate the left shoulder with the right hip and visa versa to train this effect. It is the serape effect that enables us to pull and rotate generating huge power needed at times when handling these beasts.

How did you get on with the running drill in front of the mirror? That's incredible isn't it? From the chapter you should now understand how the muscle imbalances in other areas of the body affect the pain experienced by many EA's. By knowing which exercises to avoid you will also now know how to be injury free and take a proactive approach to your long-term back health.

How You Will Develop Your Riding Fit Legs



In this chapter you will finally learn how to get the saddle strong legs you have been crying out for. You will learn how the exercise programme must mimic the demands of your event to create optimal results. For many EA's they worry that doing leg exercises will increase muscle bulk, I will help ease your fears here. You will also have a greater knowledge of why slow long runs are doing very little but waste an hour of your time-constrained day.

Legs....Your Answer To Building Riding fit Legs

The best exercises for your legs are the ones that replicate the demands that riding your horse. Too often the EA will have been following that generic magazine programme that has them sat on the leg extension machine or the hamstring curl machine at the gym. These not

only have no relationship or cross over to the equestrian event, but it actually often over trains the already dominant muscles.

The quadriceps and hamstrings are integral to the overall conditioning of the EA, but the gluteals (buttocks) and peroneals (front of lower leg) are also in need of attention. A combination of the exercises that keep your pelvis in a neutral alignment are needed to counterbalance the position many EA's find themselves in for the majority of the day. This is one of anterior tilt. The pull of these muscles often results in lower back pain, so the EAP takes care of these imbalances and aims to reduce the over training of already over active muscles.

A combination of knee dominant and hip dominant leg exercises; that increase specific range of movement (ROM) about the ankle, knee and hip will provide the EA with the ROM they need when they ride. The leg exercise actually improves strength and power, but with the added strength and endurance comes an improved ROM. An absolutely crucial part of the benefits of strength training is that you will gain extra flexibility.

Specificity Is Crucial To The Equestrian Athlete

You will find that a lot of the generic programmes have leg exercises that look like the way you might train if you were looking to build bulk. So for instance it would be leg extensions for 10 reps followed by 1 minutes rest, repeat these 3 times. Not in the EAP! I have trained many EA's whom I have helped to not only utilise the most effective exercises but also to implement specific routines of leg exercises that create a truly awesome effect on the legs.

Don't worry we won't be doing heavy squats that will increase bulk, instead we will be concentrating on using our own bodyweight, bands and dumbbells to increase the muscular strength and endurance of the legs, so that when you ride, muck out or for that matter anything you do in daily life will become a whole lot easier.

The best exercises are the ones that open up the hip joint to improve not only range of movement but strength through this range. A lot of people make the mistake of just stretching or just strengthening, and you will never be truly riding fit until you take the holistic approach to both strengthening and stretching.

The most specific exercises are the ones that replicate the movement patterns and metabolic demands of the legs. So we use an exercise known to my EA as 'Pulsing Lunges' to

create a huge burn in the calves, to condition them to spend a period of time on the balls of the feet, much like a jockey or event rider would be in the x country phase of their event. This kind of specificity of the leg exercises and routines is like nothing you have seen yet and the order is very specific to ensure you are indeed using the right muscles to do the right exercises.

Mimicking Demands

The fundamentals of effective training include specificity and progression. Specificity is both to do with the joint angles and muscle demand placed. You see it is pointless doing an exercise for 1 hour if your event doesn't last longer than 15 minutes. That's not to say that the total session length won't be longer than 15 minutes, but I would suggest that there is no need for any session to take longer than 30-40 minutes for the EAP.



So once you have a true metabolic simulation of the event, it is then the job of the fitness professional to specifically and systematically place the exercises into a series of pairs (supersets), tri-sets (three exercises) or quad-plexes (four exercises), to give you exactly what you need.

Creating the muscular balance of the lower part of the body will go a long way in helping you to be riding fit. The improved strength of the posterior chain, in particular the hamstring and gluteals will really help the EA to minimise the strain on the pelvic and lower back regions.

There is a lot of demand on the muscular strength and endurance (MSE) of the leg muscles, whether it is in isometric (static hold) and quasi-isometric positions (dividing a repetition into shorter ranges with short, intense holds to generate maximum tension), so it makes absolute sense to start with these exercises in a programme to improve peak force production.

To then train the legs slightly more dynamically, adding a full range of movement and lastly onto the powerful explosive movements necessary for the sudden changes of direction and unexpected movements that the EA frequently encounters in their event.

Mobilise Before Your Ride

By mobilising the pelvis, thoracic spine, knee and ankle joints prior to riding you will find that when you come to get on and off you feel so much better. The mobilisation warms up the synovial fluid in the gaps between joints and improves neurological activation of the muscles you are about to work. Failing to do this is essentially like waking up with your eyes closed, the first thing you might do is bang into something. This is the same for your muscles; you cannot expect them to wake up without going through the process (opening eyes) of mobilising the joints they move.

Once you have dismounted, you might un tack first, but then I strongly recommend that you stretch the hip flexors, upper and lower back and the adductors to prevent them from becoming facilitated (over active, short and tight). This will then enable you to use the correct muscles as you walk away from the yard and on to your next daily task, whether that is to ride another horse, muck out, go to work, or anything else for that matter.

By using the foam roller (which you can see in [this](#) video tutorial), you will release the fascia (connective tissue) that surrounds the muscles allowing you to regain the fullest ROM possible and prevent injury.



The EAP has within it, specific exercises for the external rotators of the hip to aid with mounting and dismounting. By activating these muscles the action of taking the leg away from the body (abduction) becomes a whole lot easier and pain free. This won't happen overnight, but I can assure you that long term this will improve not only the quality of your riding experience but ultimately the longevity of your career.

Weight Won't Be An Issue With These Leg Exercises

The exercises themselves are not what make you heavier; it is the programme design, testosterone, loads, supplementation and nature of the exercise that determines how much you grow.

With using the resistance training, you can expect to become far more efficient, drop body fat and feel far healthier. You may notice that your body appears different, you may even see muscles that you didn't realise you had before. This does not mean you are getting bulky. The main reason that many people can't see their muscles is simply because they had a layer of body fat covering their muscles.

The process of muscle growth is known as hypertrophy. To get huge hypertrophy gains you need to eat specific quantities of protein per lb of body weight, train with moderate to heavy weights; take longer periods of rest and work muscles in isolation. We won't be paying attention to any of these in that way during the EAP. The exercises we do will mainly focus on strength and endurance of all the muscles and movement patterns you use on your horse and around the yard.

Due to the nature of the workouts you will complete, the loads will not be heavy enough to create a big enough hypertrophy effect. The rest won't be long enough to replenish the muscle glycogen stores sufficiently and the movements will use multiple joints avoiding isolation for the majority of the workout.

Don't confuse increased muscle definition and reduced body fat, with growth or getting bulky.

Don't Run Slowly With the Crowd

One of the things I want you to do is to stay well away from the things that didn't work for you before. For that matter, even if you did feel some benefit, I want you to stick to this programme 100%. Remember that one of the common problems is that the EA was given generic programmes before and I don't want you going back to that. My major worry is that other EA's are still going to do the same things as last year or the years before that and expect different results. Albert Einstein defined this as 'Insane'!!

One aspect of the generic programme was a long steady state run. Your friends and colleagues may have previously done this or may still be doing it. I think that running has its place in training programmes, but not in the format that you may have seen it before. Using long steady slow runs, actually teaches your body to be slow and it easily adapts to this. Not only



does the slow long run make you slow, it will increase your cortisol levels (stress) and reduce your metabolism long term, due to using muscles stores to source energy. Intervals of work and rest at a high intensity are what you, as the EA need to be thinking all the time.

It's not that running has no benefit at all, I use running with EA's, and rather it is the format and nature of the workout that is detrimental to the EA. By using the interval approach to

your running instead of the long slow runs, you will not only increase your chances of remaining injury free, but you will not get bored and you will actually feel massively different benefits, in a much shorter time. Many people choose the long slow run because they are not comfortable with getting out of their comfort zone.

If nothing changes, nothing changes!

In this chapter I hope it has inspired you to view training the legs for equestrian in a very different light. Mobilisation has been an important part of my EA's plans up to now and you are no different. I think you can now see why we need to mobilise the hips to minimise the detrimental effects whilst on the horse (poor posture) and after dismounting. I hope your mind is at ease with regards to the leg exercises and your previous fears of growing huge body builder legs are also eased!

How To Fuel To Ensure You Don't Fall At the Final Hurdle



In this chapter you will learn how eating toxic foods is robbing you of all the nutrients you need and causing you to store excess water in an attempt to dilute the pollution. You will also have a better understanding of how to eat when at your event and how to make sure that your nutrition doesn't fall down because of a lack of preparation. In terms of endurance I will explain what it takes to keep up with the professionals and how you can maximise your time in short and sweet sessions.

Making the Most of Your Feed

Remember we eat food to replenish and fuel our daily tasks to carry them out to the best of our ability.

Feeling lethargic and low on energy is something that is common between EA's in a constant battle, whether it is due to trying to drop weight or purely due to poor nutritional habits. Many people, not only EA's have a misconception about the fact that all energy is equal. If this were the case it wouldn't matter if we ate 1500 calories of cream cakes and doughnuts or 1500 of broccoli, fresh mango and chicken breast. I think you know what is best here.

Sustained energy will allow you to eradicate the problems of fatigue in the later stages of your event and also on a daily basis away from the horse. By eating whole, fresh and clean foods your body will become far more efficient at absorbing all the nutrients you need. The processed, packaged, ready meals that you may have been consuming have been ruining

your ability to absorb everything of any value to you. Making the most of your energy starts by cleaning your body up from the inside to out, allowing you to make the most of your energy.

Eat Your Way to Success

Healthy eating is absolutely essential to optimise your performance both on and off your horse. Let's face it, who wouldn't want to make the most of an already hectic day and busy day-to-day schedule.

Healthy eating does not need to involve needless counting of calories and points scoring.

Many people fail on their nutritional plan or 'healthy eating' because it often relies on them weighing foods, counting calories, measuring % fat and many other methods. By



sticking to a few very basic principles you will be far more successful and will ultimately find it far easier to stick with, long after the initial 4 weeks.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said *'Principles there are few, methods there are many, and those people who follow methods often fail, those who choose principles succeed'*.

This is so true, and I have seen many clients achieve outstanding results by adhering to the few principles I outline to them. Because it relies on a few principles that really make sense, the Hot to Trot Nutritional Plan can be rolled out to the family, so it stands up where most nutritional plans fall at the first hurdle. Due to its principle-based approach this plan has a longevity factor, way beyond the duration of this programme.

Eating healthily will allow you to maximise your time on your horse, improving concentration and improving your workout results, it all just makes sense!

Eating Well Where Ever You Are

You too can eat healthily around horses and your busy schedule by knowing exactly what you are going to eat during that day. Some people like to plan it daily; some in chunks of 3 days and others have found it hugely beneficial to stock up on the foods for the week. This preparation will keep you on track the whole time and help you to succeed where other people have failed. By preparing your meals and snacks, this will allow you to prevent the

low blood sugar levels or the 'peaks and troughs' that you may have experienced previously. It is here, when your energy dips, that you will start to snack on the bad foods.



It is the toxic, processed foods that increase your body's ability to store water and fat. By knowing what you are going to snack on it takes the guesswork out of your nutritional plan and will guarantee that you don't slip where you may have before. You need to get out of the habit of stuffing your pockets with junk food, or slipping inside after you have mucked out or ridden for a quick fix and then feel horrendous come 11am or 3pm because your blood sugar levels are yo-yoing at a rate of knots!

By simply using the foods that are compliant in the Hot to Trot Plan you can make your own snacks, pop them in a small tub and take them with you to the yard and just before you start to feel hungry grab it. The 'snacks on the go' section in the Hot to Trot Cookbook has some excellent smaller meals that you can take with you when you are on the move.

The EA who figures out how to harness the collective qualities of his or her lifestyle and riding ability is going to blow the competition away.

However if you fail to prepare, prepare to fail.

What and How Much Can I Eat

You see the problem faced by the equestrian athlete is not only physical performance, but a large part is obviously getting the nutrition and energy to exert them self when needed. With a constant battle with weight management, whether it be dropping weight for a race or maintaining weight for strength needs, it is now essential the EA has a specific plan that takes care of this in the most simplistic manner, so as not to add stress.

Being busy and active is not an excuse to eat rubbish; it's a reason to eat well.

The added stress of not knowing what to eat and eating rubbish is part of what makes EA's store excess water and fat. The hormones involved are cortisol and insulin. Cortisol is a stress hormone, and the body in times of stress, secretes it. This secretion can be caused by a number of factors but one of them is nutritional stress caused by poor nutritional habits.

Increased cortisol levels due to high levels of sugary, toxic, processed foods lead to insulin being secreted into the blood, to remove the sugars. This results in that yo-yo effect I

mentioned earlier and this is where you get tired, eat rubbish, feel good for 30 minutes, eat more rubbish and ultimately become very efficient at storing water to dilute the pollution you have put into your body.

So if you are looking to drop weight, all these sweets and sugary snacks you are eating is not only affecting your health, but also the effectiveness of your weight loss target, whether it be long term or short term. In terms of quantity you will need to worry far less about quantity if you can stick with the principles, but the nutritional plan gives you guidelines on portion sizing.

Cooking Healthily Doesn't Need To Take All Day



Cooking healthy meals has long been about those flowery books with pretty pictures and extensive and often expensive foods. What the EA needs is a simplistic, nutritious meal that can be used for the whole family or perhaps popped in the fridge ready for the event the next day. By eating from the clean, whole sources of fresh and often locally produced foods, you can make extremely tasty meals from sources and combinations that you would not perhaps thought went well together.

You see, by using the basic ingredients, you will often be able to whip the recipes up really quickly with outstanding nutritional value. When you start to see how easy this healthy eating is and how it fits into your everyday life, you will wish I had told you earlier. When you get home after a long day at work during the winter, there is nothing better than coming home to a beautiful dinner that has been cooking in the slow cooker all day. Eating simple, but healthy meals has been a saviour to my EA's when the horses are in during the winter and time is not so readily available.

How about just spending 10 minutes less on face book or watching that soap, and use this time to prepare a decent meal that you can have for dinner and lunch the following day. This will not only save you the time of a trip to the shop for a coffee and cake at lunch time the next day, but also you will be able to rest easy in the knowledge that you are optimising your body for your horse.

No More Tantrums on the Yard

As we mentioned earlier the constant battle with the weight is a problem for many EA's. The main problem stems from poor levels of information currently in the equestrian field from fitness and health professionals. With many young jockeys leaving home on a shoestring and older riders battling with weight issues, many find themselves on sugary snacks, trying to reduce calories in an effort to shed pounds.



The constant wave effect within the blood of sugar and subsequently the hormones cortisol and insulin, results in an irritated EA, that often finds them self weakening in an event or on the yard when things need to get done. Anyone else on the yard at that time then bears the brunt of the mood swings.

By eating from more slow release sources of carbohydrates such as sweet potato and brown rice, your blood glucose levels will remain relatively constant, your mood and performance will follow suit. Let's not forget the family at home; they don't want a stressed parent or sibling because they are not eating properly. They have to live with you; they too deserve to be surrounded by supportive and positive people who are striving to be the best they can. All you have to do is follow simple principles.

Your Energy Levels at The Event

Eating and drinking at your event doesn't need to be a problem or an excuse to eat rubbish! This will ultimately sap your energy when most need it. Up to now we haven't really considered the negative effect of dehydration but that's not because it is not important.



As little as 3 % dehydration can result in a 10% reduction in performance. The major negative effects of dehydration for the EA are largely seen on hot days at events and late on in the event. Due to the importance of water on the brain function, any slight deviation results in huge deficits in the ability to concentrate and focus on the task in hand. When you couple this with horse tiring, this often results in mistakes and some are very costly

from a results point of view and some from an injury point of view.

Water is also responsible for many of the detoxification pathways and without the necessary hydration levels you will never be a lean athlete that has given themselves a decent chance of success. I normally recommend 1 litre per 50lbs of lean body weight. This will vary slightly between individuals, due to exercise and climatic conditions, but it will serve you well. Thirst is a very poor indicator of hydration levels; you have become dehydrated long before you feel thirsty. You should never feel thirsty.



By preparing your snacks for the day and eating whole foods throughout the week you will feel energised throughout your chosen event. If you choose to head to the burger van instead, you are doing a disservice to you and your horse.

The Lungs of The Rider.



Cardiovascular (CV) conditioning is best described as the ability to deliver oxygen and nutrients efficiently to working muscles. CV conditioning for the EA is vital, as without this we cannot use the muscles we have trained to help the horse from start to finish. You will often see those EA's who have worked on their core, but don't have the CV conditioning to use this when the time comes.

An EA with a strong core and a well conditioned CV system will win over the EA who has solely focused on core or the EA who hasn't even acknowledged any area of EA specific fitness. Any jockey or eventing EA will know only too well how tough the later stages of the race or event are. It is here that the specific CV fitness and conditioning really pays dividends.

An EA with poor CV conditioning will struggle to deliver the oxygen and nutrients to the peripheral areas (the brain, legs and arms) during this time as the body will go into a protection mode. EA's are often competing at around 80+% in terms of their maximal effort, so doing long steady state exercises such as a 30-minute jog just doesn't make sense. The EA needs to work very close to their lactate threshold to push this up. This is the point at which the body switches from being able to use oxygen to having to use other energy sources to provide energy to the working muscles. This means using intervals of work and rest that take the athlete to an intensity that they are not comfortable with (like when they ride), and then back (rest) to a level where their heart and lungs can recover. I have seen immense results using this style of interval training.

Think Short & Sweet

SHORT & SWEET

It has been a bug bear of mine for a while that an EA would come to me with their 'training programme' that consisted of 3 long runs per week.

Now, this programme is very generic, and could be anyone's programme, after all the EA has very specific want and needs.

The generic 3 long runs per week type of training ends up making EA's 'skinny fat people'. I mean this in the nicest way, but the excessive volumes of steady state cardiovascular work, actually decreases the EA's muscles mass, driving up the oestrogen levels and down with the testosterone levels. This promotes the storage of fat and a reduced metabolic rate.

An EA with a high % body fat will ultimately feel sluggish and bad about themselves. These are the ones that also snack on the wrong foods and see the most dramatic negative effects. Don't get me wrong there is a definite need for CV conditioning, but it has to be very specific in terms of work and rest and the muscles and joint ranges of movement experienced. This programme will cover all the CV you will need, it won't be easy but you didn't sign up to do the same rubbish that hasn't helped you be the best you can up to now.

The best CV exercises are the ones that create a similar demand for energy as the EA experiences during their event. This does not involve just exclusively lying on your back on a mat with your feet on a stability ball, although this doesn't mean this is not included in the balanced EA Plan.

Keeping Up With The Best of Them

You need to engage in a structured programme that gives you progression from start to finish. If you are an amateur jockey, from time to time you have to compete with the professionals who get to ride far more often, so hence they keep their race fitness up throughout the season. The amateur jockey's circumstances however are very different.

I don't think it matters if you are striving to be a professional or not, you are an EA because you love your horses and you want to be the best you can and that is why I want to help you. You need to focus on many areas including mobility, stretching, leg strength, core stability, suppleness and most of all within a time frame that is limited due to lifestyle and other commitments. By using a set of principles your training becomes very much clearer and not based on faddy methods, sporadic class attendances or random runs!

By breaking your training into weeks, the whole picture becomes far clearer. We need to be very mindful of where the event or competition occurs. So you will not be training as hard on a Friday as you would on a Wednesday and you may not train your legs on a Monday morning due to the competition being on a Sunday.

You will address every single area of EA specific fitness and not just train the areas you think are important or you like. The holistic nature of the programme will make you a supple, strong rider who is riding fit, not just another rider who does what he or she thinks is right or read in a generic magazine or DVD. The successful EA will engage in a time framed specific set of exercises, in a progressive manner that develops riding fit qualities.

In the chapter above you have just been given some fantastic tips on maximising efficiency of exercise. I also explained how you could keep up with the professionals who have the added advantage of being able to train without working. I also explained how eating clean whole foods are going to help you with your weight management.

Mind Over Saddle

This chapter is perhaps the most crucial of them all. Without this support you would never achieve your very best on the programme. You will learn how to stay on track where you may have previously gone off the rails. You will understand how to go from goal setting to goal getting. I will explain how you can use mental rehearsal to make sure your nerves don't get to you in your event.

Stay On The Racing Line



Staying on track is crucial to the success of your programme but ultimately will determine the experience you have on your horse or in your event.

So I bet you are thinking this information is fantastic and better than anything you have been able to lay your hands on for your equestrian fitness. But how am I going to stay on track. Firstly I want you to stop chasing perfection! I want you to be Excellent!

I think the aforementioned is far too often used and the later more infrequently. It's important to understand the difference between the two terms. '*Perfection* is, broadly, a state of completeness and flawlessness', whereas *Excellence* is the gradual result of always striving to do better. In my eyes, you can never achieve perfection, however, you can try to better yourself each time and by repeatedly doing this, your actions will not be infrequent acts, they will become a habit.

Remember we are what we frequently do!

So now we know what we are trying to achieve, we can focus on the processes that will get us there!

I want you to set goals to achieve excellence at every opportunity. I want you to take a moment now and identify the processes you are going to go through to reach your ultimate goal. You will then turn your goals from goal setting to goal getting because you are at least 100 times clearer on how you will get there. Just put it this way, if you were going to go to America leaving from London, you wouldn't just turn up in London and hope that someone picks you up, packs your clothes and takes you to your exact location without writing it down for them or communicating in some way.

Because you are chasing your true passion in life, your horses, being the best you possibly can, you are far more likely to stay on track. By sticking to the EAP 100% you will succeed, so keep that in mind when the training gets tough and keep your end goal in your mind.

By using the weekly planner template laid out earlier you will stay on track provided you don't pay lip service to this. Don't just say I will do the exercise every day, I want you to start to say when you will be doing the exercise, and this will make you much more accountable. I am not there to kick you up the bum, but imagine that we have an appointment and you would be embarrassed to turn up late.

If your satisfaction and drive wanes for whatever reason, then you need to readdress your goals and look at the processes. Are you following them? Strive for excellence and know how to achieve it.

It's Time For You To Get On Top Of It

Mel Ciff, one of the world's leading guru's on training and sports science, highlighted the following as useful insights into the ways to manage stress:



- **If the task set is exciting, challenging or emotional then you are more likely to succeed.** Let's face it what isn't exciting about the possibility of riding more effectively and enjoying your time on the horse more?
- **In managing stress you need to block out the influence of your subconscious and conscious mind.** You need to try to take yourself to a place where you are completely worry free and at one with your surroundings. You need to be there for 10 minutes with your eyes closed.
- **Initial response to the situation may result in stress mechanisms being activated, but may actually result in freezing, or temporary mental or physical paralysis, which may be the most damaging effect of stress.** When you are practicing your x country round, you would not avoid the most difficult fence in training. I used to hate ditches, and used to avoid them, and I used to stop at them, or get thrown off every time. I learnt the hard way, but quickly. You need to apply this to your own training and when things get tough you need to repeat them, so not skipping that workout when it comes round again because it hurt last time. You need to get

comfortable with getting uncomfortable. By putting yourself in this situation you will learn to cope with it and deal with the intensity. Believe me this will help you to cope with the stresses you encounter on your horse far easier than ever before.

- **The planned exposure to manageable stresses with the existence of super compensatory processes may enable you to cope with higher levels of stress.** By using periods of work and rest within sessions you are constantly challenging your body's ability to replenish energy stores and reduce stress. The specific nature of the rest days in the programme allows your body parts recover and replenish before you train in that way again.
- **To understand movement processes is invaluable to the management of stress.** Because you will begin to understand what the body is expected to cope with, whenever this sort of stress occurs again, like in your actual event, your body will recognise this far more readily and deal with it in a more efficient manner. This could be the difference between 3rd place and 1st place.

Winning....Your Way



Making your way to the winning enclosure, or the winner's presentation is a goal of many EA's. But is winning just about coming first? Are you really winning if you hate the process you're going through to get there?

I wouldn't mind betting that you would be far happier winning if it didn't nearly kill you on your way to the line. If you could wake up in the morning pain free and head to the yard feeling on top of the world, it's got to be better than feeling sluggish and lethargic.

Winning can be maintaining an injury free, riding fit body. It can also be getting on and off without excessive effort and/or pain. It would be essential for all EA's to view their winning process as being able to have a long and pain free route to their horse. Successful EA's tend to be the people that spend a lot of time out of their comfort zone and when others quit, they don't.

Many EA's suffer with nerves prior to their event. I always advise my EA's to mentally rehearse their event. Focusing purely on the positive experiences they have had up to now. Block out all the negatives and just take a moment now and think of all the great times you have had on a horse.

Ok, done that? I hope so, it really is powerful. Now when you get to your competition rehearse those great times over and over again and imagine having the ride of your life and WINNING.



Goal Setting & Goal Getting

Many EA's ask me why they need to set goals. Bottom-line here, those who write goals down are 500% more likely to achieve their goal. Why wouldn't you want to be in that group as well?

The dictionary definition of a goal is a projected state of affairs that a person plans or intends to achieve. So, goal setting is the process by which you break down your goal into manageable parts and you identify how you will achieve it and how long it will take. Here's what you need to do.

You need to plan out what you want to achieve and give it a specific time frame. But there's a more accurate way to summarise it. A goal is a dream with a deadline. You need to use the **SMART** acronym. You need to be **Specific** in terms of your goal, put numbers to your goals. Make the goal a specific thing. How about a placing at an event or not feeling stiff after your event, or praise from a partner or colleague? The goals need to be **Measurable**, set specific repetitions in a time frame, placing at an event and make them **Attainable and Realistic**, so that you don't set yourself up for failure. It is essential to make them **Time framed**.

Try to set goals for what you want and not what you think you can get! Think big.... but remember that perfection is not achievable; however, excellence is to surpass or go beyond where you are today. So when you are thinking about what you want to do, aim for excellence!

I try to encourage my clients to focus on the process goals; these are goals that will get them to their outcome or end goals. This may be concentrating on attending training sessions, having the right mindset when they are training, eating right and following their Hot to Trot Nutritional Plan. Personally I find that when I write down what I want to achieve, I am far more accountable. Tell someone what your goal is; tell as many people as possible

what your goals are. Be accountable to something or someone! So when your training commences you will be **goal getting** not just goal setting.

The Need For Change

It is time for the rest of the sporting world to stand up and take notice of the Equestrian sport because gone are the days that equestrian is a sport just enjoyed by the gentry, who over indulge and don't care about the result. Equestrian is now a sport that demands respect, and should be held in the same light as every other.



For us to ensure this happens we need to start taking ourselves very seriously. Me as the fitness professional and expert, and you as the EA, need to change the way we view fitness and health in relation to the equestrian sport. Albert Einstein defined insanity as expecting different results by doing the same things. This cannot happen and I will not let the EA be subjected to the same generic and non-specific programmes and group exercise classes again. For me to achieve this I need your help though. I need you to stick 100% to the plan and follow it through to the letter. Your results will directly correlate with the commitment to the programme.

You need to follow the principle based approach rather than chasing quick fixes, to show the rest of the equestrian world what can be achieved when you prepare specifically for your event, whether it is at the highest competitive level or socially.

We need to start helping other EA's to choose a strategy to get riding fit not chase opportunities.

Remember, that if nothing changes, then nothing changes!

Ok, so hopefully you found that very useful information there on getting yourself in the right mindset to optimise the training and ultimately, what matters, your actual event or discipline of equestrian you are preparing for. Remember the **SMART** acronym, this really works, but remember to aim high, don't set goals that are too easy, they won't excite you and you will get bored. I hope you found the winning information useful, by enjoying the process you go through to get to winning; it just makes the whole thing worth it!

The Home Straight

You have reached the end of the book!

But before you go and get riding fit, I would like you take a moment to recap. I wanted to remind you quickly of some of the key points that you have learnt in your journey through the book.



In the early stages of the book, we looked at *'How To Create The Stable And Mobile Body You Need'*. From this you should have taken away the importance of creating a balance between stability and mobility work in your programme. You will now have a deeper understanding of the posture problems that you may have faced previously or what may have happened if you didn't take action by signing up for this programme. I am sure that you now have a clearer vision of how to achieve optimal alignment with the use of efficient core training and specific mobility work.

We then discussed perhaps one of the biggest issues you face with being an EA, in the section, *'Time Is On The Mind'*. I hope you can now see how the EAP will succeed where others have failed when dealing with all aspects of time around the programme, with the short but efficient workouts. You now know why you needed a plan that took into consideration your weekend's events. It was also my aim to help you create a much more informed reasoning behind what to be doing and how you will structure your day/week. All in all you will now be empowered to create a clearer picture of how very effective training can be fitted into your busy schedule.

Next up, you looked at an essential part of an EA's plan *'Why You Will Be Assessing, Not Guessing For Your Core'*. Here we discussed assessments and core training. You now know why assessing not guessing is crucial to the long-term success of your training, health and well being. Please tell me that you will never do one exercise again. What was it?

Yes, sit-ups! They are actually making your posture worse and negatively affecting your seat position. I do hope that when next Christmas comes around again you will use the EAP and not a generic programme, DVD or class that have not worked for you and other countless EA's.

You then looked at *'How To Create Your Saddle Strong Back'*. From this I really hope you gained the knowledge you need to take proactive action with regards to your lower back health from day to day and for the longevity of your equestrian career. You will now have a

solid and rationalised reason to avoid certain exercises because of your individual posture and the nature of your sport.

Lastly, you were able to realise why you cannot just train the superficial abdominal muscles to rectify postural problems of the past and will be able to take a most holistic approach to your core.

I then guided you through the topic of *'How You Will Develop Your Riding Fit Legs'*. One of the major concerns for many people like you at the start would have been about bulking from using resistance. I really hope you now know that the style and use of work and rest intervals will help you to reduce this bulking, but will keep your lower leg flexible and strong. From this you should also take away an understanding of the need for a blend of knee and hip dominant leg exercises to prevent anterior tilt issues commonly seen with EA's.

You have probably always acknowledged the importance of having strong legs but now you know that you need to mimic the demands of the equestrian event to get the riding fit legs you crave. Lastly, you know why shouldn't be out running multiple long, slow, steady-state runs each week and why doing this may make you a 'skinny fat person' and add to unwanted bulking of the calves.

We then addressed energy and endurance in a chapter titled, *'How to Fuel to Make Sure You Don't Fall at the Final Hurdle'*. From this, it was my aim for you to have understood how you can rid the body of toxins to prevent fat storage and excess storage of water, which will affect your appearance and performance. Then empower you with the knowledge of how to eat well where ever you are, whether it is at the yard or at an event. Lastly, for many EA's, perhaps yourself included a knowledge of how to keep up with the professionals within your chosen equestrian event by maximising fitness levels. Having said that, if you are a professional then, you may well have gained the knowledge that will push you right to the top of your tree!

In closure, but by no means least we looked at mindset, in the *'Mind Over Saddle'* section. It was here that you gained an insight into how you can stay completely focused and on track, to make you unstoppable on your way to your goal. You now know how to manage stress and mentally rehearse positive situations for the best results both on and off the horse. You should now know how to turn goal setting into goal getting by taking care of the processes, to take yourself to your winning post.

I hope you enjoyed your read, and now have a great understanding of the why's and how's behind the programme. I cannot wait to get started on the programme with you.

Matt 😊



LET'S GO

AUDIO CHAPTERS

How To Create The Stable And Mobile Body You Need

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/howtocretestability>

How To Create The Stable And Mobile Body You Need-SUMMARY

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/howtocretestabilitysummary>

Time Is On The Mind

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/timeisonthemind>

Why You Will Be Assessing, Not Guessing For Your Core

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/assessingnotguessing>

How to Create Your Saddle Strong Back

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/strongback>

How You Will Develop Your Riding Fit Legs

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/ridinglegs>

How To Fuel To Ensure You Don't Fall At the Final Hurdle

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/fuelingyourself>

Mind Over Saddle

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/mindoversaddle>

The Home Straight

<http://theequestrianathleteplan.com/audio/thehomestraight>