



## Arizona Reining Horse Association Trainers Discussion

### “Tricks of the Trade”

#### *Tuning Your Turnaround*

Next to a sliding stop, a spin is a trademark maneuver for a reining horse. The spin is a demonstration of the horses' ability to move quickly on the front end while keeping his hind end in one place. The best way to describe a spin would be a fast 360' turn on his haunches. When performing a spin the horse is required to step rhythmically with his front end around with his rear legs. The horse should always be crossing the outside front leg over the inside

front leg. Every NRHA reining pattern requires you to spin your horse 4-4 ¼ spins in each direction. When showing your horse in competition you can be awarded extra points for your speed and accuracy in your turnaround. To help all of us non-pro's "tune our turnaround", Top NRHA reining professionals Dallas Wedel and Ben Balow will teach us of few of their "tricks of the trade".

#### **What is the biggest mistake you see people make when starting their turnaround?**

*Dallas: "The biggest mistake I see is that riders are too quick with their hand. They need to slowly move their hand away from the horses' neck, but instead I see them move to quick and pull right away. The horse needs time to react before you should pull on them. I also see people go to use their leg too soon."*

*Ben: "Non pros seem to be too quick with their hand or when they show they use too much leg to turn their horses. When riders use their leg too soon or too often, there horses get where they rely on the leg. After a while the horse will just ignore your leg. I like to teach my students to turn with no leg at all. The horse should speed up because you cluck and you have conditioned them to turn properly."*

#### **Do you have any quick tips for starting your turnaround?**

*Dallas: "Number one, slow your hand down. Number two, sit deep in your saddle. A common mistake is that riders want to use their leg too soon. When you use your leg to soon, your horse starts to think that when your spur comes off they should stop. If you keep your leg out there and chase them around the turn, the horse will turn smoother and more freely."*

*Ben: "The biggest thing that I see mostly with Rookie's or Non Pro's is that they start their turnarounds with their horses looking to the outside. A drill that I do is lay the outside rein on their neck, I give the horse approximately 2 seconds to respond, if they don't I pull the inside rein. I don't ask them to turn but to look to the direction you are asking to turn. Pull the inside rein when they don't look. You want them to look before you pull."*

**What is the most important thing someone can do to prepare their horse to turnaround?**

*Dallas: "I like to prepare my horses to turn by trotting in and out of the turn. What I mean by this is you trot a small 12ft diameter circle, then sit down ask to spin a couple times, then you use both legs and push them out of the turn and into the circle again. Always sitting and turning makes the horse to heavy."*

*Ben: "For me, the most important thing is get the horse to look the way I am turning. Keep in mind, that every horse is different. One thing I like to do in both directions is look where I want the horse to step. For example if I were turning to the left I would draw my reins back to my left shoulder, then look where I want their foot to step. By doing this it draws the horse to step to that spot. This works really well for horses who want to jump out the turnaround."*

**What "tip" could you recommend for someone who rides a horse that is difficult turn?**

*Dallas: "Time for a trainer."*

*Ben: "I like to take the pressure off horses that are difficult to turn. One of the first things I like to do is go in the show pen and not expect a lot. I like to get the horse in the turnaround as uneventful as possible. It is important to take the bad experience out of them, and take the pressure off. I do this until they are comfortable and ready to be asked for more."*

**What is the best way you can practice a spin without making your horse anticipate or dislike to turn?**

*Dallas: "Walking/trotting circles when asking them to turn keeps them fresh."*

*Ben: "I don't recommend on older horses to practice your spins every day all day. The biggest thing is to make sure you practice in a different spot in the arena. Don't practice all the time in the middle. Turn in the corner, or do it sometimes outside the arena. Try not to overdo it. Mix it up."*

### **If a horse steps on itself a lot when turning, what should you do?**

*Dallas: "I like to do a counter arching exercise. I work in a 15" foot circle. I allow them to turn towards the arc which is the outside of the circle. Then I lay my inside rein of the circle across their neck, and have them turn into their arc."*

*Ben: "If a horse steps on itself a lot, protective boots is a must! The most common reason they step on themselves is because they are sucking back to far. They need more forward motion in there turnaround. What I do is to fix this is I will drive the horse out of the turnaround, then put them in the turn, turn a few steps, then drive them forward out of the turnaround, push them into the bridle, put them back in the turn, and then drive them back out of the turn. I do this until the horse has more forward motion in turnaround."*

### **How do you know your horse is ready to gain speed in the turnaround?**

*Dallas: "Your horse is ready to gain speed when they are turning freely on their own. What this means is that they turn without a lot of encouragement from you. To ad speed, the next step is a cluck, bump the inside rein, and a cue with your leg. Horse must move free and at a consistent cadence."*

*Ben: "What I do is I will try to push the envelope a little bit every day. They might get a little bit uncomfortable at first, but towards the end of the session I make it comfortable again. For instance, I go from 1 mile an hour to 3 miles an hour, then leave my session at 2 miles an hour. I like to gradually build speed. I don't expect the horse to do this overnight. This works well over time."*

### **Any tips on asking for more speed?**

*Dallas: "Once you start asking for speed, most horses need to straighten there body some. When we first teach them they have a lot of arc in their turn. But as you gain speed they will need to straighten out some. This is true for most horses."*

*Ben: "I don't ask for more speed in the turnaround. What I will do is "chase them around" at the trot with a little pressure, push them into the bridle, and then let them fall into that turnaround. If I don't achieve more speed or "try" from the horse at that stage, then I do it again. Let the turnaround be an award, not a punishment."*

### **What do you do if your horse stops before you want them to?**

*Dallas: "One of the best things you can do is make sure you are not bringing your hand back to the middle to fast. If a horse stops on me I will usually use the outside leg and drive them into the turn. I avoid using my hand. A common mistake is that non pros want to use their hands to much and that causes confusion. What they need to do providing the horse is staying the turn is to use increasing outside leg pressure. Start "5*

*pounds of pressure” with outside leg, if they don’t respond to that do “10 pounds of pressure kick”.*”

*Ben: “Usually that problem is manmade. Riders tend to quit riding and let the horse get into that habit. If my horse stops before I ask I will take my outside leg and roll my spur up their side. When I turn I make sure they turn until it is my idea to stop.”*

### **How often should you practice spins and when?**

*Dallas: “I like to practice on an older aged horse every other day or less. I will practice spins after any point they are warmed up.*

*Ben: “The main thing to remember is that you want to warm your horse up before you practice your spins, but you don’t want them to be tired. I like to practice midsession. I practice until it feels right, maybe 1-2 times a week. On my better ones maybe every 1-2 weeks. “*

### **Do you recommend practicing spins at a show?**

*Dallas: “I recommend practicing the start of a spin and a cluck to make sure they are paying attention. I do not recommend training a spin at a horse show. At a show you should check vs. train. Make sure everything is working.”*

*Ben: “I recommend “warming up” your spins at a show. They should feel really good and confident when you walk in the show pen.”*

### **Any tips for your “show pen” turnarounds?**

*Dallas: “Count your spins before you spin. 1, 2, 3 Whoa. A lot of people miss the first spin count. Look up; find your judge after you start your turn. Make sure you get your first revolution counted.”*

*Ben: “Don’t change anything. Do what you have practiced at home.”*

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