

Riding By Reasoning

By MONTE FOREMAN

Photos by the Author

Part XIII

"Difficulties in Changing Riding Styles"

ONE who is interested in getting the maximum efficiency out of his balanced ride saddle may encounter some difficulty while changing over from riding the seat to riding the feet and legs. A rider who already stays as near a horse's balance as his saddle will allow, experiences no difficulties from the very first. He feels "to home" and gets a big bang out of a balanced ride saddle's freedom, leg-grip, and "all-around" *doing* activities.

Roper, reinsman, trainer, and ex-saddle bronc rider, Dell Owens, who used to show the famous, unbeatable, champion stock horse, Red Fox, said he's been wanting that "feel" for years. He borrowed one of my saddles,

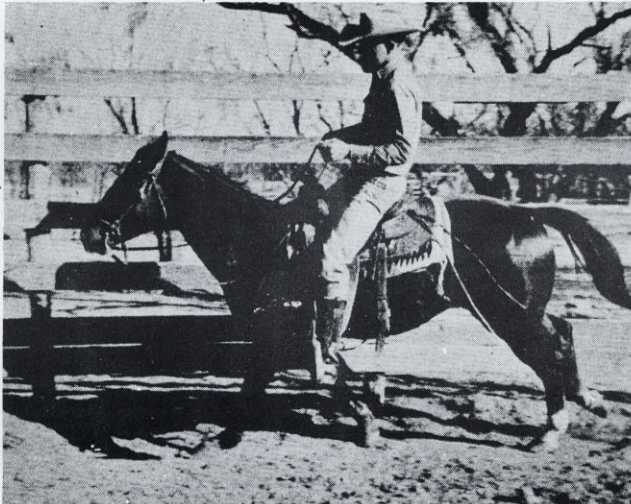
threw it on Old Snip, stepped up, warmed him up, got a grin on his face like a burro eatin' cactus, and went to wheelin' 'n dealin' Old Snip around. Don't reckon he has been on one of his four saddles, except when my three were gone, since his "try-out." He's got a doggone good riding, slightly silver-mounted, three-quarter rigged trophy saddle that he won on Red Fox. He gave it to Mrs. Owens, so it doesn't get much use. But, it's a good riding saddle.

Riders like Dell Owens are not many. The average rider, particularly one who has not followed *Riding by Reasoning* closely, will have troubles, because years and years of habitually

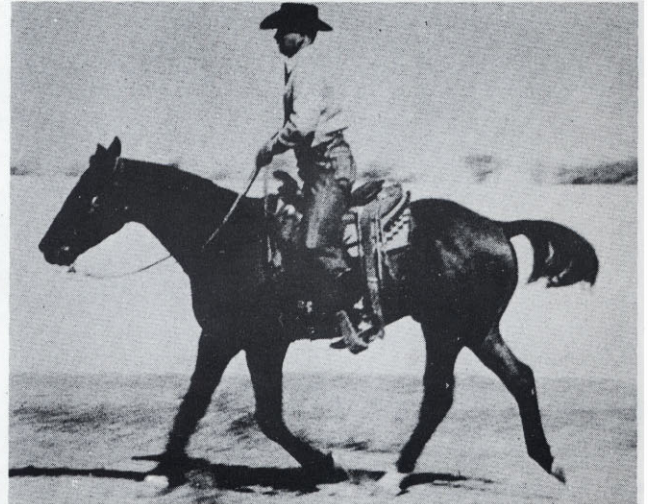
riding with all his weight on his seat cannot be changed to riding on his feet and legs overnight — nor in a few days. It takes time to get used to it. He will have to concentrate and practice and keep in mind that his horses will be able to carry him better when he rides close to their carrying spot.

Although his seat will move closer to the "carrying spot" — which helps some — riding on his feet will move him still farther, as well as acting like "shock absorbers."

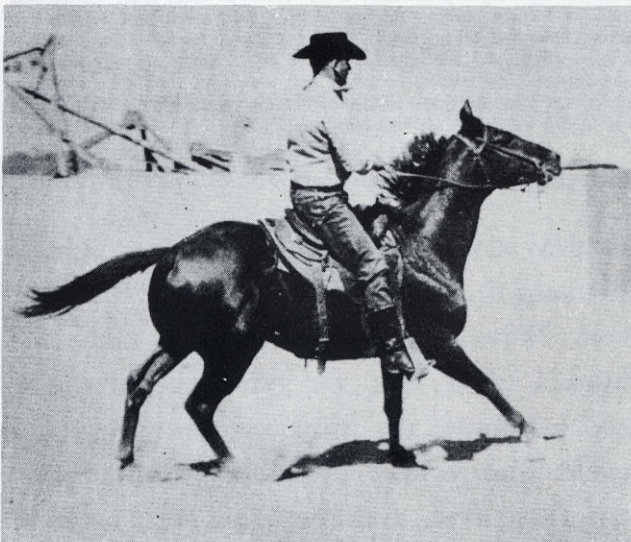
The stirrups on these balanced ride stock saddles are not hung as near the horse's balance as on race, polo, and jump saddles that ride "over and/or around" the horse's shoulder blades.



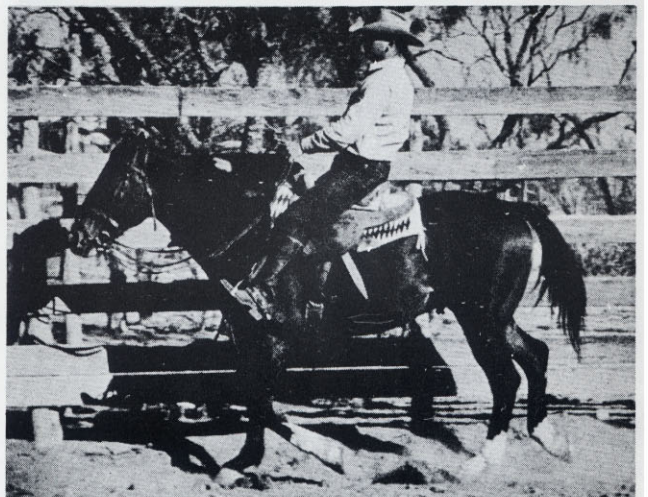
● 1. When a man has ridden this way all his life—and gotten by . . .



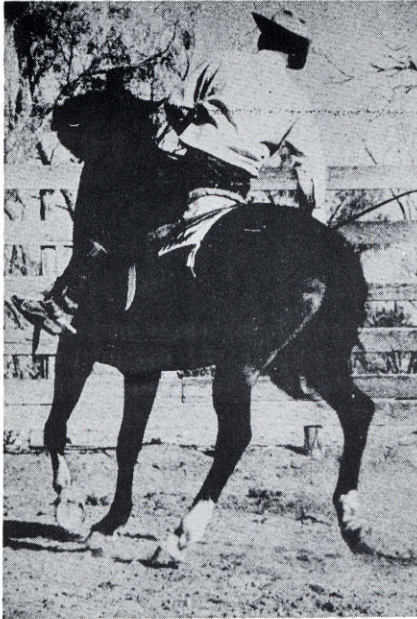
● 2. Slow trotting, sitting down, and standing a faster trot, his feet have a tendency to get back of him, tip him over forward. He usually has to hold the saddle horn to steady himself.



● 3. On loping turns and changes of leads he gets caught off balance and makes it more difficult for the horse to handle its hind feet (usually it will be unable to change leads behind). If the horse pulls or is unsteady, it gets worse.



● 4. His habit of sitting back is hard to break. On a balanced ride saddle, if he has not followed *Riding By Reasoning* or learned the reasons for staying forward, he will climb back and go along the same old habitual way . . .



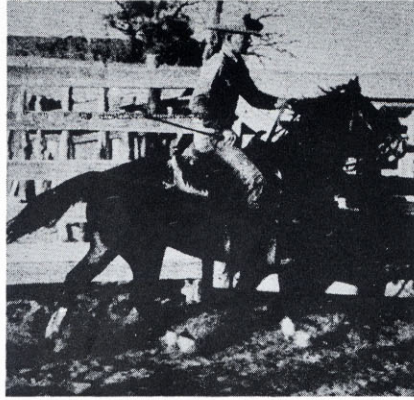
● 5. . . . causing strain on his horse's back by his weight — and he loses all the leg grip and use of leg aids. (He knows nothing about leg aids so does not know what he is missing.)

The stirrups were set back for several reasons: mostly because of the way wooden saddle bars are made and ride on the horse's back. (If they are placed and ridden on the shoulders for a length of time, sore shoulders will result.)

Notice in illustrations 4, 5, and 10 how the rider is using a "naked" saddle tree (during experiments). It had skirts and rigging, but the stirrup hangers were held on by screws. The hangers could be changed and put at different distances from the front of the bars. They were tried hung up near the bar-fronts. When speed handling, they worked fine — for the rider — because his legs stayed in the "rider's groove," with no tendency to move backward. Not so for the horse; the rider's weight tipped the front ends of the bars into the horse's shoulder blades, and unless there was an excess of saddle blanket padding, we could tell we were going to have a sore-shouldered horse poco pronto.

At slow work — riding jog and slow lope as cowboys do day in and day out — particularly at a slow lope, we found it quite a strain to stay over the stirrups or sit down either. So we started moving the stirrups back, arbitrating between comfort for horse and rider — and the basic principles for better performance by getting closer to the "carrying spot."

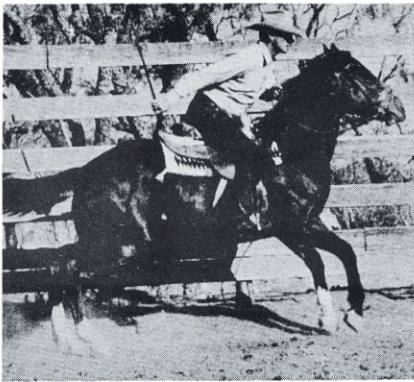
The stirrups are now hung approximately the same distance from the front of the bars as on the U. S. McClellan and "re-worked" saddle bronc "committees" — about four inches farther forward than on the majority of double-rigged saddles. And now with the slightly built-up seat which



● 6. At first he rides a lope like this . . . (Sam Redford was being coached by the author when these pictures were taken.)



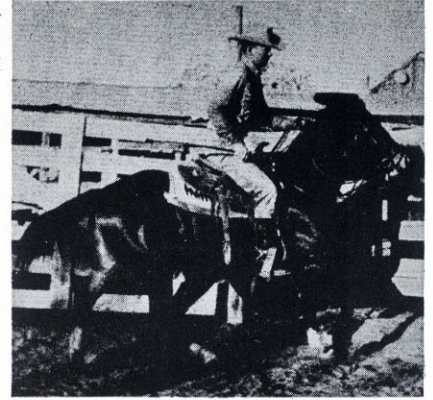
● 8. If he tries to stand, he either does not lean his upper body far enough forward to get his balance over his stirrups, or he stands up too high like this.



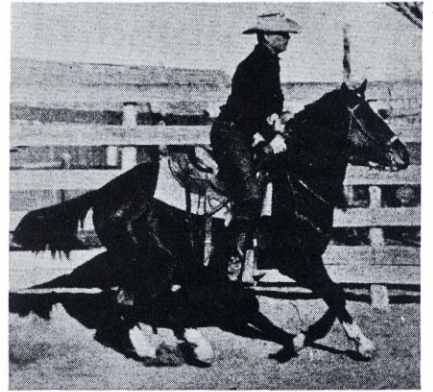
● 10. On jump offs he has to practice leaning much farther forward to be in line with his horse's drive, still keeping his weight on his feet . . .

tends to tilt the rider slightly forward and the bulkless rigging which does not push his legs away from the horse, the rider is placed over his stirrups and in the middle of his saddle bars.

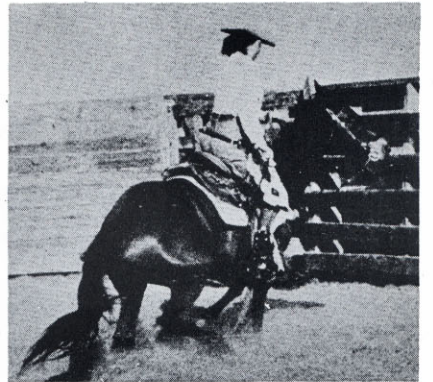
It took eight years of experimenting, plus \$9,000, before the first balanced ride saddle was sold to a man



● 7. Concentrating and practicing he gradually gets his seat more in the middle of his saddle and more weight on his feet.



● 9. A better position. Weight on his feet and upper legs, with his heels jammed down, which gives more leg grip.



● 11. . . . To give more freedom to the horse's hindquarters to come up underneath and work with ease as illustrated here by Doreen Norton, author of *The Palomino Horse*.

we did not know and had never seen ride. I'd written him to let me know, after he had ridden it a couple of months, just what he thought of it. His letter came a couple of months ago, saying, "I liked it from the start. The more I ride it; the more I like it!" (Thanks, Cliff!)

"No saddle can *make* you ride correctly — all it can do is *allow* you to ride correctly!"
