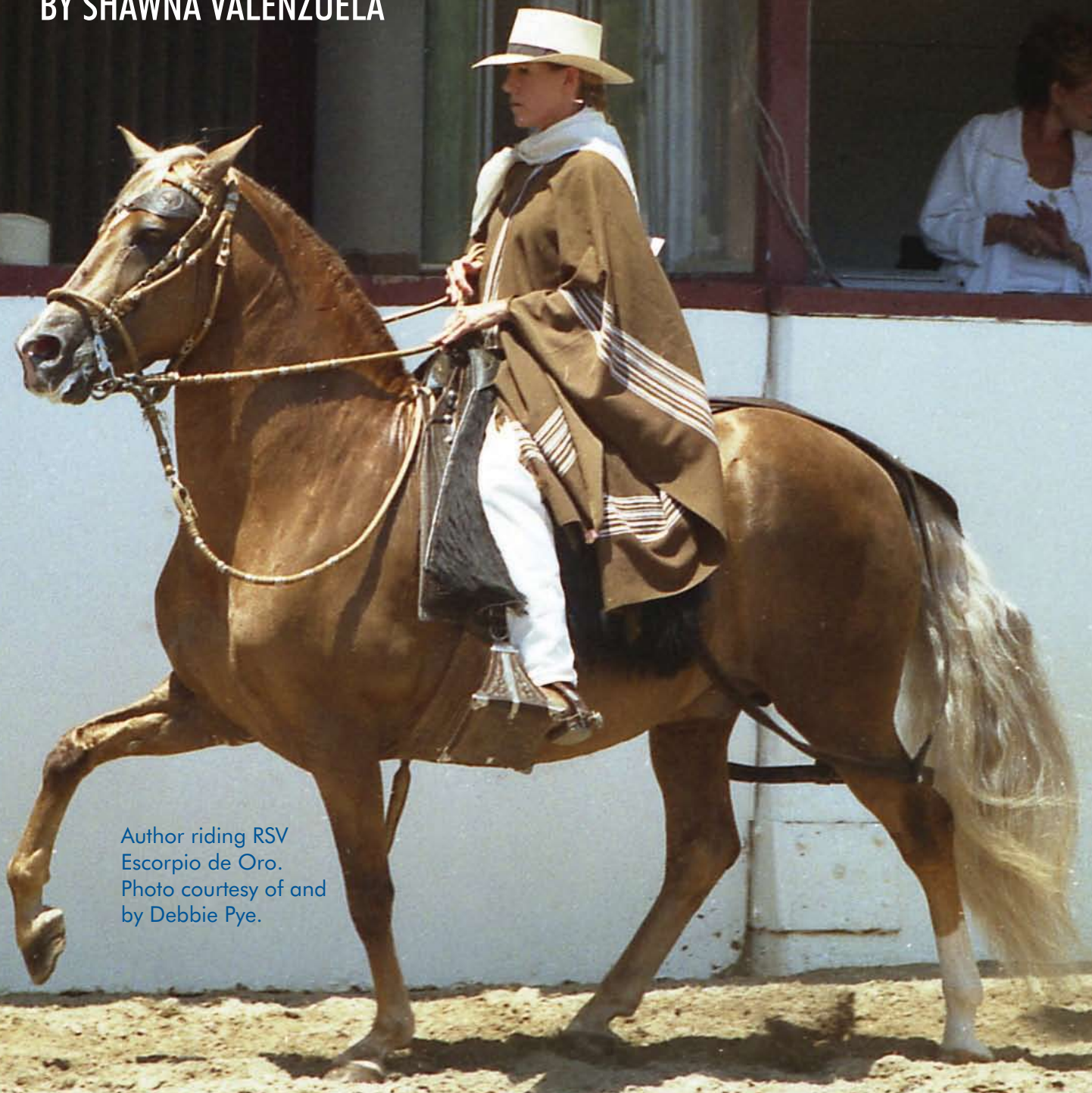


Proper Peruvian Show Ring Equitation

BY SHAWNA VALENZUELA



Author riding RSV
Escorpio de Oro.
Photo courtesy of and
by Debbie Pye.

LATELY IT SEEMS WE AS A BREED HAVE BECOME VERY LAX in our show ring riding and showmanship etiquette. Because we have an “easy” riding horse, it would appear that a vast majority of us have become overly “relaxed” in the appearance of our horses and ourselves as a finished show ring ready team. Here are a few aspects of proper equitation and some helpful tips to help you achieve the best possible results for you and your horse once you hit that show arena.

Lets start with the seat. You should be sitting balanced and centered in your saddle with your spine straight but in a relaxed, not overly stiff manner.

If you sit too stiffly, your horse can feel this and many horses become nervous and fidgety when confronted with an overly stiff, non-flexing rider. You should never, under any circumstances, present your horse in a manner that is painful or uncomfortable to him. I see many people being told to “lean back” in the saddle. It is erroneously believed by some that this leads to better overreach and collection. The truth of the matter is that when you lean back, you thrust your legs forward and change This usually results in the horse hollowing his back and sticking his nose up in the air in an have inflicted on his loin. The next thing you know, you have a charging and unruly horse because he is more interested in relieving his pain than working with you as a team.

The next issue that I see many problems with is the correct placement of the rider’s legs and feet.

Feet should never be thrust forward! If at any given time you can look down and see your toes forward of your knees, your feet are too far forward! A good exercise to practice is to ride as you normally do and glance down every few minutes and check the position of your feet. Make a conscious note on how your leg feels in the saddle when it is held properly. Soon you will know the correct position of your leg by the way it feels alone and will not need to glance at



Kelly Powers on RDS Pasion de Oro. Note the rider’s straight spine and alignment of her shoulder, hip, calf and heel. Photo courtesy of Conquistador Magazine.

where your toes are. Your shoulder, hip, back of calves and heels should line up in a straight line vertically. Unless you have exceptionally large (size 15+) feet, your toes will always be behind your knee when you adhere to the hip, calf and ankle rule of thumb.

Hands are also important

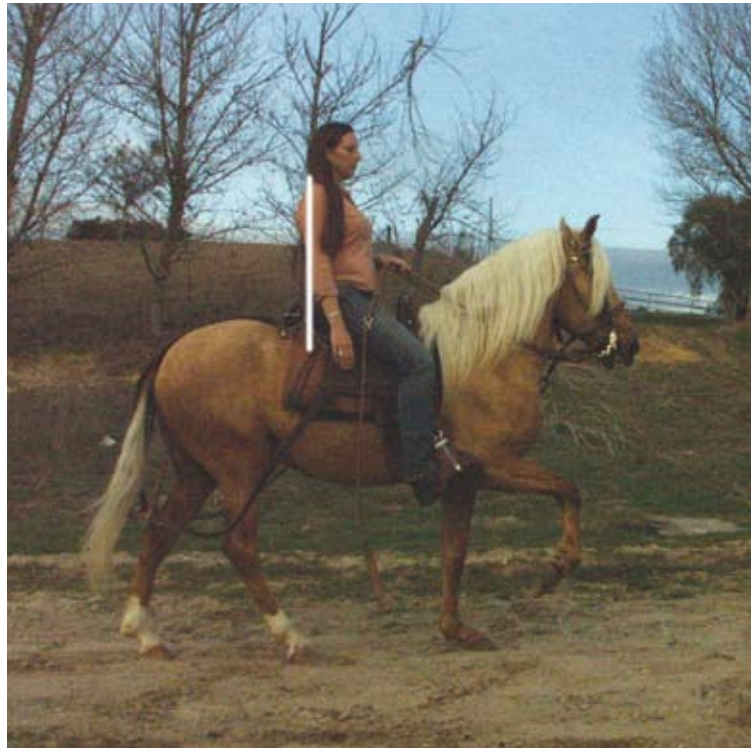
– very important. There are many correct ways of using your hands and you might choose the one you personally prefer. It is a general preference of most judges to see one

handed riding in performance classes but almost all of them are quick to say that it is only good if done correctly and your horse performs relaxed and collected in this manner. I would much rather see a good performance using two hands discreetly and quietly than one-handed jerky reining. In truth, it is much easier to correctly balance your horse and his movement with the use of two hands. Most disciplines of dressage use two hands as do the majority of English riding. Western riding on snaffle bit futurity riding is done two handed and finished western horses are for the most part ridden one handed. Riding your Peruvian Horse one-handed in performance classes will definitely give you an edge if done correctly. If done sloppily or incorrectly it will only work against you and your horse. One handed riding should always and only be done in the show ring using your left hand. Equitation classes should always be ridden one-handed, using the left hand with no fingers splitting the reins. Elbows should always be against your sides and no air should be seen between them and your body. When holding the reins in your left hand, the romal should be held firmly upon your thigh with the right hand. The romal should not ever be flopping around loose or just hanging there.

Your chin should be up and you should be looking ahead of yourself.

Do not look down to see if your horse is overreaching. This looks very amateurish and unprofessional. It also shows that you lack confidence in your abilities and those of your mount. When you are making a circle, look where you are going but do not look into the circle and lean inwards. This looks unbalanced and often times throws the horses bending into his circle off, making a triangle, or worse yet, causing him to drop his shoulder and hop.

Remember. Spine Straight. Shoulders back. Toes never forward of the knees. Shoulder, hip, calf and heel to make a straight line. Chin up, eyes forward. Hands (whether one or two and only one-handed in equitation) STILL AND STEADY. And very importantly, SMILE! A smile denotes both confidence and relaxation. Judges love to see these qualities in a good rider. TM



This is an example of improper equitation. The rider is leaning back, her legs are too far forward and her toes are in front of her knees. The stirrups being too short exacerbate the situation.



This is also an example of improper equitation. The rider is leaning forward, looking down and again, the stirrups are too short.