



Horse Time versus Human Time

By Tim Hayes

Someone once said that God invented time to keep everything from happening at once. In fact humans invented time in order to help bring order, meaning and understanding to their unique existence.

As humans we are the only animal with recognized self-awareness, rational thinking and therefore a mental concept of time. Other animals may be aware of the physical changes in day and night, summer and winter and thus able to respond to these changes but it is only us humans that will ever know if we are "late." A horse for that matter never thinks: "oh my, I'm running out of time." Understanding and remembering this significant difference will have an enormous impact on how you and your horse get along and the success you will achieve in your horsemanship and riding.

Today more than ever humans live by the clock. We fit every minute of our lives into a schedule.

We create predetermined requirements as to how much time it will take to achieve satisfaction in everything we do. However anything that we think must happen within a certain amount of time and doesn't, is a set up for stress, tension, anger, frustration and disappointment.

Being "late" is one of many examples that will illustrate not only the difference but the importance in Horse and Human

time. If I ride on Wednesdays at 4 pm and don't get to the barn until 3:55 pm, I may rush to groom and tack up my horse so I can get in as much riding time as possible. Knowing that I am "late" I think I'm using up valuable riding time while getting my horse ready to ride. This thought makes me anxious and tense. Instead of presenting myself to my horse as a happy, calm, relaxed friend and leader, I show him a partner who is anxious and tense. The quality of my physical interactions in grooming and saddling that are usually a nice way to reconnect with each other, are now a signal to my horse that something is not right with his human.

As we start to ride I feel a resistance coming from my horse. He's communicating to me in the only way he knows how; with his body. He's telling me: "I'm not feeling very safe and comfortable with you on my back right now, can you do something to help me?" I think: "Oh that's great. Not only am I going to run out of riding time, but I'm going to have to struggle with my horse and his bad attitude." I do what many people do; I blame the horse.

I begin to feel angry and frustrated and my cues become rough and heavy-handed. This is frightening for my horse. He thinks: "not only is my partner in a bad mood, but he's hurting me!" At this point my horse will usually do one of two things. He'll either emotionally and mentally shut down, brace himself and do everything he can to tolerate me until the ride is over. This is how humans create dullness in their horses. Or my horse will ask me to leave (read: buck me off). This is how humans and horses get hurt.

Natural Horsemanship is seeing and understanding every situation from the horse's point of view. It's taken me years and many mistakes to remember the enormous impact time, or the nonexistence of time, has on my horse and my horsemanship. And like everything else I've had to do to get my horse to be better; I had to be better. I had to change my behavior first.

Now when I get to the barn and I'm "late," I change my agenda. Instead of doing 20 minutes of groundwork and 40 minutes practicing flying lead changes, maybe I'll only practice our groundwork or take a nice leisurely ride with the time I have left.

By putting myself on "horse time," I show respect for my partner (who had no agenda), I spend quality time with him, not just physically but emotionally mentally and spiritually and we both continue to strengthen our relationship and my horsemanship instead of ending up frustrated, disappointed, dull or hurt.

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During the Manchester Classic show, the second week of the series, Team Molson member Angela Covert-Lawrence of Montreal, Quebec jumped to the top in the \$35,000 Manchester Classic Grand Prix to take the Otter Creek Cup. Marc and Louise Sabbah's eight year-old Belgian Warmblood Tomboy Major was her speedy partner. With J'Aime La Vie, owned by Mr. and Mrs. John Bartko, Tracy Bartko-Magness of Baltimore, MD closed out the third week of the shows, the Valley Classic, with a victory in the \$35,000 Valley Classic Grand Prix sponsored by the Equinox Resort and Spa. Bartko-Magness was given the coveted Mount Equinox Cup for her win by Gary Thulander.

During the fourth event, the Manchester & The Mountains Horse Show, Danielle Torano of Key Biscayne, FL took her turn on the winner's podium. The wife of Jimmy Torano (winner of the \$35,000 Manchester Summer Festival Grand Prix) proved her own riding abilities with a victory over rival Shachine Belle of South Salem, NY. After winning the \$10,000 Show Jumping Hall of Fame Amateur Owner Jumper Classic three weeks in a row at the Vermont Summer Festival, Torano set her sights on the \$35,000 Manchester & The Mountains Grand Prix sponsored by Hand Motors. With her mount, Quinault, an 8-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Quidam de Revel, Torano made designer Pierre Jolicoeur's challenging course look easy.

The fifth and final show, the Vermont Summer Celebration, was a significant step in the burgeoning show jumping career of Mary Lisa Leffler of Brookeville, MD. She knocked out her rivals with a one-two punch to place first and second in the Vermont Summer Celebration Grand Prix. Riding Kartousch, a 12 year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Leffler owns in partnership with 2004 Olympian McLain Ward she placed first, and aboard Graf Rossini S, owned by Bruce Chovnick, LLC she was second. Two days prior to her Grand Prix victory, Leffler also won the \$10,000 Vermont Summer Celebration Mini Prix on Kartousch. Juliana Starbuck and RCG Farm's Pamina blazed to victory in the \$10,000 Open Mini Prix.