

Lesson Topic: Renvers

The renvers is essentially the same movement as the travers on straight lines. The difference is that the wall is on the other side of the movement (See page 48). Some students learn in ways that make this concept very easy to grasp and remember. A remarkable number of students, however, are primarily visual and kinesthetic learners. For visual learners, a drawing or demonstration of the renvers will be clearer than a description. For kinesthetic learners, new movements often don't make sense to them until they can do them. For this sort of student, a movable court is very helpful. It is worth the time to move a few sections of the court to the inside about 2 meters. The rider can walk a small circle and proceed in travers down the wall and continue until she is riding along the moved sections of the court fence. At that point, she is technically riding the renvers, the reverse of travers, along the moved sections of the wall. (If the court or wall is not movable, poles can be placed to illustrate the point.) Obviously, the rider will need to learn to aid for the renvers, but this little trick with the fence, can produce clarity about the goal at the introduction of the movement.

Although the aids for maintaining the renvers are the same as for maintaining the travers, the renvers cannot be started out of a circle like the travers because the wall would prevent a circle in that direction. The renvers requires that the rider not only have the influence to maintain a horse's bend while changing the line of travel, but to produce bend where there is none, without the aid of the circle. Also, the magnetism of the wall will have a different influence over the horse in the renvers than the travers, so the rider will often have to change the dosage of the aids for each movement. Of course, if the horse is asymmetrical, the dosage may be more influenced by his stiff and hollow sides than by the relationship to the wall.

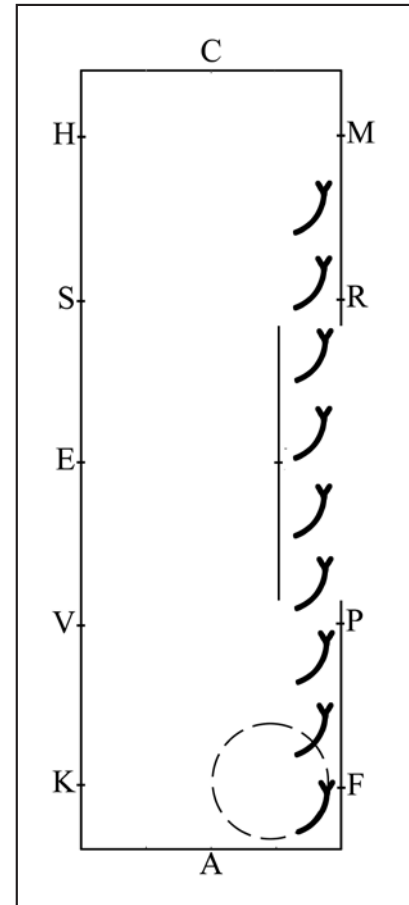
Warm up

A warm up for a renvers lesson should be essentially the same as a second level warm up for a travers lesson. The renvers is currently introduced in American national tests with the shoulder-in to renvers exercise, and this exercise is a good one for introducing the movement the first time. Once the travers is an established part of the horse and rider's repertoire, it can be reviewed in the warm up and used as a preparation for renvers. The shoulder-in and leg yield, tail to the wall, are also important preparations for the shoulder-in to renvers exercise.

The Lesson

The first exercise to establish is the circle to shoulder-in exercise. Once a good shoulder-in is established, the student can be asked to ride the horse a step forward while straightening the horse on the outside to produce a leg yield with the tail to the wall. The angle and line of travel remain the same, but the shape of the horse is changed. In the shoulder-in, the horse is bent away from the direction of travel, and in the leg yield, he is straightened with only a slight position of the poll remaining. When transitioning from shoulder-in to leg yield, the rider's leg placement will be switched from inside leg at the girth and outside leg back to inside leg back and outside leg at the girth. When the transition from shoulder-in to leg yield is successful, the rider can bend the horse again to proceed in shoulder-in. This exercise should be practiced in both directions until the rider has smooth and clear influence over the bending and straightening of the horse while traveling on 2 tracks down the wall (See Fig 1).

The next exercise takes this transition a step further. Once the horse has transitioned from the shoulder-in to the leg yield, the rider will initiate a change, a reverse, of bend by emphasizing her outside leg at the girth and adjusting the seat bones to emphasize to the seat bone on the outside. Almost simultaneously, the rider will actively flex the horse's poll to the new direction and bend the horse until the neck and chest are oriented down the inside track parallel to the wall. With



this change of bend, the outside of the shoulder-in and leg yield becomes the inside of the renvers. The new outside leg will continue to ask the hind legs to cross as they did in leg yield along the wall. The new inside leg will keep the inside bend, aid in impulsion, and keep the shoulders and girth away from the magnetic pull of the wall. Before the corner, the shoulders should be brought back to the wall and the horse should be positioned to the inside of the arena in preparation for the corner (See Fig II).

Because this is a precision exercise involving the adjustment of multiple aids and listening to the response of the horse to each aid, it is valuable to practice this exercise at the walk until it is fairly clear to horse and rider. It is difficult for students to follow the oral description of the aids in exercises where the inside and outside changes with the change of bend. Doing the exercise in walk allows the rider to make the changes step by step as the instructor coaches. Once the exercise is aided for correctly and understood by horse and rider, it can be attempted at the trot. Sometimes the exercise proves easier at the trot. If the rider has proved herself to be fairly influential in the shoulder-in to leg yield exercise, she can make the transition from shoulder-in to renvers with only a hint of leg yield between. Though all of the aids for the change of bend (the leg, rein, and weight aids) are almost simultaneous, the transition from shoulder-in to renvers is most successful when the new inside seat bone and inside leg at the girth precede the rein aids slightly and seem to initiate the change of bend from the middle of the horse. Even riders who have been riding this exercise for years often find that this tweak of timing produces much smoother results than they had achieved before.

Cool Down

As the student and horse are cooling down with easy stretching, the instructor can review the renvers exercise, give specific homework for improving its execution, and begin to discuss the role that shoulder-in, travers, and renvers play in developing straightness and collection.

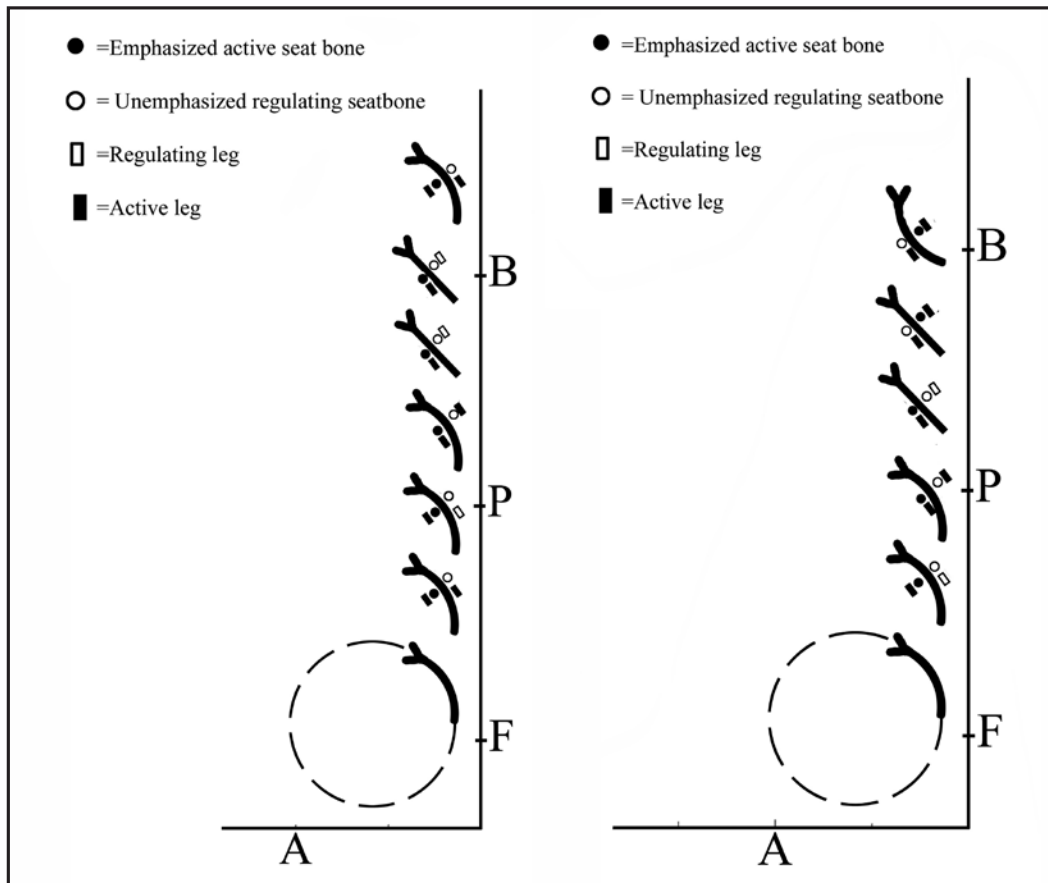


Figure I: Shoulder-in to leg yield to shoulder-in

Figure II: Shoulder-in to leg yield to renvers