

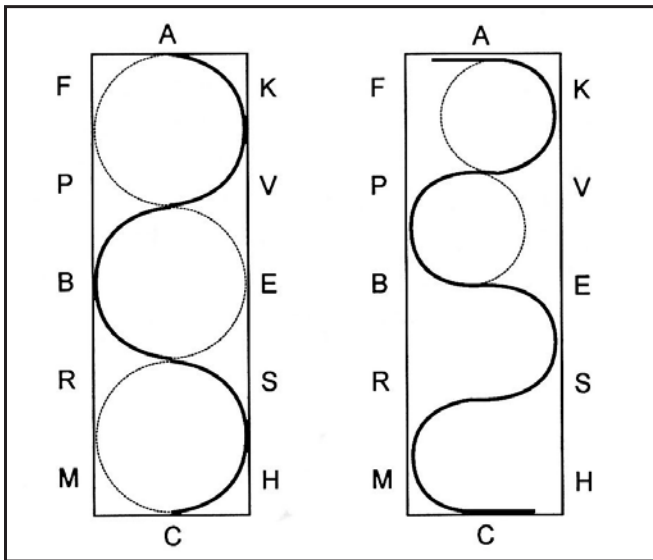
Lesson Topic: Serpentine

Definition

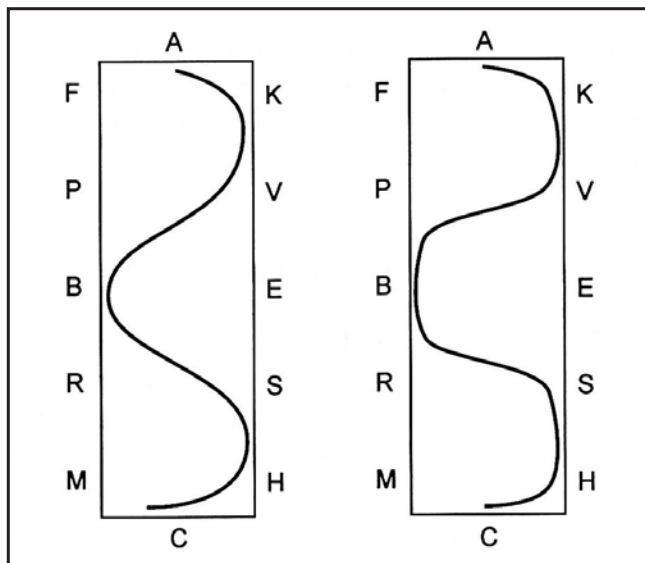
The serpentine with several loops touching the long side of the arena consists of half circles connected by a straight line. When crossing the centerline, the horse should be parallel to the short side. Depending on the size of the half circles, the straight connection varies in length. Serpentine with one loop on the long side of the arena are executed with 5-meter or 10-meter distance from the track. Serpentine around the centerline are executed between the quarter lines. (2011 USEF Rule DR110).

Purpose

To demonstrate lateral balance, throughness, and fluency in bending and changes of direction and bend. To improve the



Correctly ridden three and four loop serpentine.



Incorrectly ridden serpentine.

horse's looseness, suppleness, and straightness, always moving in correct tempo of the rhythm. Increasing the number of half-circles and decreasing their size develops collection due to the increased engagement of the hindquarters. An important purpose of serpentine is to enhance the carrying power. When increasing the number of loops the straight connecting lines become longer as the half-circles get smaller and the bend more demanding on the horse's inside hind. It also increases flexibility of his body, contracting through the inside rib cage and stretching through the outside. Each inside hind is bent more and carries more of the weight, creating greater engagement and collection. The increased bend through the body develops symmetry through even alternate expansion and contraction of the musculature.

For the rider, the serpentine improves the coordination of the aids and the control of the forehand of the horse. Seat and weight aids, in particular, in harmony with the leg aids, must dominate and precede the rein aids in order to bend and balance the horse from one direction to the other during the connecting straight lines. The rider's correctly balanced seat with relaxation is essential to the many positional changes necessary to execute the serpentine.

Execution

The rider must understand the geometry of the figure in order to understand the positional changes required to be in balance with the horse. Use cones or a white board to help the rider visualize the figure. On the curved half-circles, the rider sits with the inside seat bone and hip slightly in advance of the outside seat and hip bone. The rider's weight is slightly more on the inside seat bone. The inside leg is at the girth, maintaining forwardness and creating some bend. The outside leg is slightly behind the girth, controlling the quarters and helping the bend. The inside leg connects the horse to the outside supporting and balancing rein. The inside rein asks for position of the poll and supple the jaw, while the outside rein also controls the degree of bend in the neck.

An odd number of loops results in the horse traveling on the same rein at the end of the serpentine. An even number of loops results in a change of direction after the figure.

Common Faults

1. Uneven size of loops.

Correction: The rider first needs to clarify the exact layout and lines of the arena and the figure. The instructor can have the student walk the figure on foot during the lesson. (Or the student can draw the figure in proportioned rectangles on paper.) Teach the rider to look ahead to the lines and circle points of the figure, and follow it. Teach correct aid application, particularly control of the outside shoulder by the outside rein and not by pulling on the inside rein. Teach the influence of weight application and outside leg behind girth by riding a large figure eight.

2. Too deep into corners of arena.

Correction: There are no corners on a 20-meter half circle or circle. Teach the importance of weight aid into direction of turn. Teach preparation through half-halts. Emphasize the importance of the outside rein and leg to keep the bend and to avoid falling out of outside shoulder or hindquarters. Support inside positioning and directing rein with outside balancing rein.

3. Sharp turns and diagonal lines across the school, avoiding and missing all bend and running out of space at end of figure.

Correction: Rider needs to be taught how to ride a correct 20-meter circle with aids that are suggested in this lesson. The rider also needs to have the correct picture of the figure and the spacing in the arena clearly in her mind. The same corrections as in mistake #2 are applicable.

4. Rider lacks control over her own body and balance to direct and help the horse.

Correction: Lunge the rider.

5. Rider lacks ability to aid the horse equally from one bend into the other.

Correction: Teach rider to ride correct 20-meter circles and figure eights in order to develop aids and feel in the rider, and to gymnastizing the horse's body equally on both sides. Rider may need to be reminded to straighten the horse for one horse's length before taking the new bend of each loop.