

In Belgium & Holland **COARSE** *is good*

by Red Renchin

I HAVE BEEN SHOEING IMPORTED WARMBLOOD SPORT HORSES FOR QUITE A NUMBER OF YEARS. One of my observations was that after being here for a while the shape of their feet would change. They would go from a nice round wide foot to a medium width. Then some would go to a narrow width and then into the long toe - low heel land of no return or just the opposite, to an upright dished or clubfoot look. Other farriers reported similar problems in other parts of the country.

Last summer one of my regular clients showed her horses in Europe and when she returned, one of her horses was wearing shoes that I had never seen before and his feet were beautiful. I learned that he had been shod by international master farrier Rob Renirie from Nenejgen, the Netherlands. I then resolved that I wanted to meet this guy and see how he shod his horses. In May 2006 I did make my trip to Europe. One objective was to attend the 90th anniversary function of the

Kerckhaert Horseshoe Company and the other was to spend some time with Rob.

Rob shoes primarily high end dressage horses and jumpers and is very much in demand. We discussed a number of things, far more than I can relate in this little article but I will attempt to describe his methods of maintaining strong healthy front feet.

Rob maintains that being in North America has nothing to do with the fact that the feet do change after they get here. He says it has to do with our shoeing methods and shoe selection.

Rob's credo is, "Protect the feet, do not try to correct the feet."

To do this I picked up on three key things that I think are the critical issues.

First, Rob's shoe choice is a shoe common in Belgium and Holland but hardly



ROB RENIRIE WORKING HIND SHOE.

exported anywhere else. Don't laugh but they refer to it as the "fat or coarse" shoe. It is manufactured by Kerckhaert and is designated SN Vet/Gras. It's not a shoe that needs to go on a diet, but is one that is one to three millimeters wider than what we usually use. The shoe is made in eight and ten millimeter thicknesses. Rob's preference is for the eight millimeter thick version so it is not a heavy shoe but its wide web offers a lot of protection and heel support. Rob also prefers the version with a toe clip. This toe clip is what's called the Olympic clip. It is drawn out of the existing web so it is set back into the shoe slightly. This makes it necessary to cut back the wall as much as the thickness of the clip so it fits nicely.

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This is also something we are not used to seeing or doing. Rob believes the toe clip allows the foot to maintain its fullness unlike clips placed on the sides.

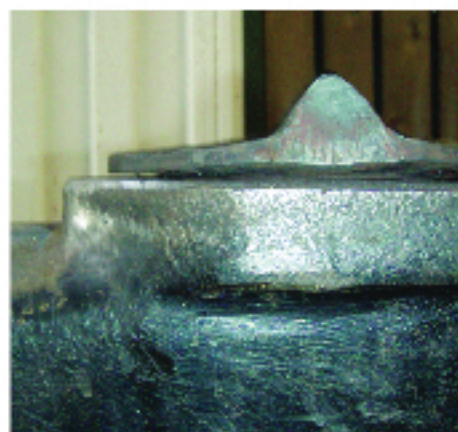
Secondly, the nail holes in the shoes are punched a little coarser than any of our commonly used shoes. This allows the foot full wall coverage and the advantage of nailing BEHIND the wall, really into the white line so you can get much higher nailing than what we are used to. Does it work? You bet it does. What you have now is a situation where

the angle of the nail coming through the wall is a little greater, thereby creating less damage to the wall. Combine this with the fact that the nail is penetrating the wall much higher where the shank is thinner and - *voilà!* - you end up with a stronger wall.

The third thing that Rob does, is to forge a concave seated out rocker toe on his shoes. This allows the foot to break over any way it wants to and effectively shortens the toe up nicely. His rocker toe is different from what we normally

see. Our rocker toe has a flat profile like that of the tip of a snow ski. His rocker is more bowl shaped allowing the shoe to be set back nicely but not applying any sole pressure. What all this does, I believe, is to change the mechanics dramatically.

One thing Rob stressed was not overdoing anything. He advises, "Leave a little for next time." All his feet were what I refer to as Goldilocks feet. They are trimmed not too high and not too low, not too long, not too short, and the



ABOVE: ROCKER TOE.



ABOVE: FRONT SHOE, SHAPED, DRILLED AND TAPPED.



ABOVE: FRONT SHOE ON THE FOOT.



ABOVE & PAGE 3: FRONT SHOES NAILED AND FINISHED.

KERCKHAERT STEEL WORKS



Introducing Triumph Steel



Kerckhaert has introduced a steel version of their popular Triumph series. This shoe continues Kerckhaert's quality and innovation in shoe design and production.

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rocker is not exaggerated. The only thing that took a little getting used to was the higher nailing.

I brought some fat shoes home with me and have them all on feet and they went on very nicely. These shoes should probably come with a warning that personal instruction is necessary before use because the potential for problems is high without knowing what you are doing. To use them properly, you need to use a forge, have some forging skills, and the patience to fit them precisely. This takes time, but I think it's worth it.

Paint and clay are just that until they are made into art by the master's hands. Rob definitely has that master's touch for turning shoes and hooves into fine art. ■



Left: The SN "Vet" shoe series that is mentioned in the feature article are not currently available in the US market. Your supplier can only purchase them for you in full boxes and the lead-time is 6-8 weeks.

FARRIER TIPS

Recycling Lead

Mr. Sammy Williams from Mexico, Missouri sent this tip in recently. A gaited horse shoer, Sammy uses lead from time to time in his work.

"Use an old-time cast iron frying pan and weld an extension to the handle with a nickel welding rod. You can then put the lead in your gas forge – and pour the molten lead into your molds sitting on a level anvil."

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Black Magic in Belgium

by Dan Burke



KERCKHAERT HORSESHOE COMPANY RECENTLY HELD IT'S BI-ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE IN TEMSE, BELGIUM. This event draws several hundred farriers from Europe and beyond. The two day program has developed into quite an extravaganza, with two of the featured events involving forging and shoeing competition between farrier school teams and a competition between the children of farriers. Both competitions involve a lot of energy and provided great entertainment. The intensity and effort of the children was not less than that of the school teams and it brought smiles to the faces of the audience, especially when the prizes were handed out at the end of the day.

In addition to the competitions, food and beverage service, Kerckhaert invited a very talented blacksmith to demonstrate throughout the second day of the open house. Mr. Roger Bockstaele of Landskouter, Belgium brought with him a sampling of the work he has done in his shop at Landskouter. There doesn't seem to be any doubt that the work he does is "magical" in every sense of the word.

Mr. Bockstaele participated in the ABANA conference in Asheville, North Carolina several years ago. His many pieces were given a special showing in a gallery set up for his visit. His occupation before retiring a few years ago

was as a machinist. His blacksmith work was his hobby and passion for many years before getting the public exposure of the ABANA conference and now the Kerckhaert event. When you visit with Mr. Bockstaele and see the work he has done, you come away with an appreciation of his attention to detail, love of nature and his true joy in showing others his work.

The photos we have in this article are only a small sampling of the work he has done. I think birds must be his specialty, as I have seen full size herons, eagles, owls, jays, and other species. But he also has numerous small pieces including a miniature "self portrait" complete with the anvil and tools. No matter what size the piece, you can tell that Mr. Bockstaele has put his heart and soul into the work.

We hope that Mr. Bockstaele will someday make it back to the US and perhaps be able to demonstrate his talents here. In the meantime, if you ever find yourself traveling in Europe you should be sure to look him up in Landskouter, Belgium - my bet is he'll be in the shop, working his magic. □

Kerckhaert Reaches Another Milestone

Kerckhaert, the world's largest and oldest independent manufacturer of horse-shoes reached another milestone in 2006. The Dutch manufacturer, founded in 1916, has been operating continuously for 90 years.

The founder, Honore Kerckhaert, a blacksmith and farrier by trade, began by producing workhorse shoes in Vogelwaard, Holland. The headquarters and main manufacturing facility are still in Vogelwaard - managed by a fourth generation of Kerckhaert family members. Since their beginning, Kerckhaert has always worked to bring quality and innovation to the forefront of their efforts. This effort is recognized worldwide and in all disciplines, including jumping, racing, pleasure riding and event horses.

The growth of the company in recent years finally pushed them to look beyond the village boundaries. Vogelwaard, primarily a residential village, refused Kerckhaert's request to expand the production facility within the village limits. Not to be deterred, Kerckhaert now has a tremendous new shipping and receiving facility 10 minutes from the factory, allowing them to

utilize 100% of their space in Vogelwaard for production.

In recent years, they have installed state of the art machining centers to ensure every piece of tooling is uniform and precise. In addition to tooling, they fabricate many parts for the machinery that has been developed by Rudy Kerckhaert, (third generation and still involved in design). The equipment may well be the most sophisticated horseshoe manufacturing equipment in the world, able to produce 30+ shoes per minute. But Rudy Kerckhaert is most proud of the fact that the basic principles of today's equipment were the same as those of his grandfather in 1916.

When you open your next box of Kerckhaert shoes, be sure to think of the history and tradition of the family owned business - and their focus on producing high quality product for your use.



Rudy and Martin Kerckhaert discuss plans for new shoes with customers from North America.

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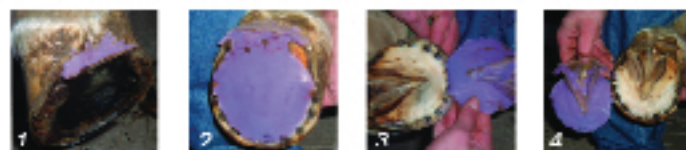
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