

The Natural Angle

A PUBLICATION OF PRACTICAL IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR FARRIERS

Volume 6: Issue 4

WINTER IN WEST PALM

Every winter the shoeing activity in the West Palm Beach, Florida area picks up dramatically. A recent visit to the area for an FPD clinic gave us an opportunity to visit with farriers that work the area year 'round as well as those that follow the show circuit for the hunters, jumpers and dressage horses. Many of the top horses in the east and Midwest call this home for a few months each winter. We visited a number of farriers working in the area, and along with Rudi Kerckhaert of the Kerckhaert Horse Shoe Company talked with them about various shoes, styles and techniques.

We spent time both on and off the show grounds at Wellington. There are a number of farriers that stay throughout the show season and others that come in from their home area on an as needed basis. It's not often during the course of the year that you will find so many farriers working on so many show horses in such close proximity. There is a camaraderie that develops as farriers work in a setting like this and it was interesting to see this in action. Many farriers that work through the season here help others with equipment, supplies and even labor when necessary.

The work that is available in West Palm Beach is not unlimited despite the large numbers of horses that winter in this area. Many of the farriers have lived here, at least during the season, for a number of years and have developed their clientele through years of dedication and attention to the work they do. A large number of farriers that travel in for shorter stints have clients here that they have worked for at home for many years. The level of show competition is very high and the expectations of the client are also. They rely heavily on the farriers to get them through what can be a strenuous period.



Most of the stabling is done in temporary stalls.



Rudi Kerckhaert discussing Triumph shoe with Dan Haussman and Sean O'Neill.



This Monetta trailer rig is set up for all contingencies.



Conference between owners and farriers.



Hoof has a crack developing.



George Fitzgerald and Dan Haussman discuss options.

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You see a lot of farriers working in the show environment with a variety of rigs and equipment set-ups. Most carry a full range of power equipment, including drill presses and tapping equipment, as most of the jumper clients require screw-in stud holes to be put in the shoes. There are different types of shoes used but you find a majority of the shoes being put on are pre-clipped fronts and hinds. The time saving features of shoes like the SX-8 and other Kerckhaert styles are critical to keeping up with the workload. Most horses are shod on a 4 to maximum 5-week schedule- sometimes even less. A lot of hunters and some jumpers are getting aluminum up front. You frequently see steel or aluminum egg bar shoes.

The farriers that have been on this circuit have learned to rely on each other. We watched as two of the top farriers on the circuit, George Fitzgerald and Dan Haussman, consulted with one another on a quarter crack case. This is one of the advantages of shoeing in the show environment; you can often get feedback and opinions on problems from some of the top farriers in the country.

As many of the farriers will tell you it's not all "fun in the sun" shoeing the winter circuit. But those that have developed their skills, with the horses and people, find this to be a rewarding opportunity. *n*



Another trailer, built by Stone Well.



Front shape being marked for outside branch.



Warmblood just in from Europe.



Hot fitting hind.



Typical hind shoeing, drilled and tapped.



Ira Green checking fit of new Triumph.

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West Palm Beach Shoeing Clinic

The show venue has been the source of a number of shoeing styles for many years. George Fitzgerald spoke about this in a farrierproducts™ shoeing clinic he worked with Dave Farley. They spent a day going over the shoeing of the jumper – with Fitzgerald explaining the evolution of shoe styles on the circuit from the 60's until today. Fitzgerald was focusing his attention on the hind end during the clinic and he brought shoes he dated for the attendees. He started with the hand made heel caulks on hand made and keg shoes of the 60's, to entirely hand made shoes of the early 70's. The next phase was the heel and jar caulk of the 70's and 80's. In the 90's a number of farriers started using studs instead of caulks which led to the current shoeing style using pre-shaped and pre-clipped shoes like the SX-8 or DF Kerckhaert series. Drilling and tapping shoes for as many as three stud holes has replaced the heel caulks once forged by hand.

But regardless of the general "style" you will notice that many farriers have developed their own particular style that marks their work. There are a number of farriers that have traveled the circuit for many years and have seen a lot of styles, fads and miracle cures come and go. What endures is a good understanding of what the horse has to do for a living and a realization that good sound hoof prep and careful attention to the details will keep you in the hunt.

We will do an in-depth article on the shoeing of the jumper in a future issue. n



Dave Farley, left and George Fitzgerald during a clinic break.



Dave nailing front shoe.



Finished front.



Finished hind fit.



George Fitzgerald working on hind foot.



L to R: Ira Green, Rudi Kerckhaert and Dave Farley discussing shoeing techniques.



60's to 70's style



70's



70's



Early 80's



Current

MAINTAINING YOUR EDGE

Roy Bloom did a knife-sharpening article in a previous issue of the Natural Angle. His process involved the use of a belt sander and other power equipment such as the grinder with the felt wheel. This is a very effective method but you may find this is not practical. Using the same logic as Bloom, you can keep a pretty good edge with some of the hand held sharpeners and hones that are on the market. The key to any method is to not let the knife edge get away from you, but rather keep it maintained whether you use power or hand equipment.

You will have to establish the fine bevel that was mentioned by Bloom.

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Left to Right: Eze Lap tapered (model 571), Eze Lap round (model 551) farrierproducts® sharpener, Bellota 6" and 8" files.

It may take more than a hone to do this. If you don't have access to a belt sander or other power tool you might use a file with a very fine cut and at least one round edge. The Bellota 6" or 8" file has the type of cut you need. When you have established the bevel you can then use a hone to fine tune the edge. There is a new diamond particle sharpener from farrierproducts® that has a solid shaft and the kind of shape that works well for a hoof knife.

You should secure the knife in a vise if possible. This puts the knife in a stable position and makes it possible to use both hands on the sharpener. Your sharpening should always be on the top side of the blade. Your strokes should be even

and as much as possible at the same angle. Work the hook with the narrow edges of your hone. Some hones are round and small enough to go in the hook- others have a taper that allows you to work in the hook area. (Eze-lap makes two models that have fold up handles and a small enough diameter to work.) Keep in mind that as your knife wears, the thickness of the blade near the cutting edge changes. You will occasionally have to come back with a file to reduce the thickness of the area behind the edge. It is this long taper that helps the knife work through the cutting stroke easier. If it is too thick you will meet with resistance.

The back of the blade should always be flat. A quick stroke of the hone to knock off any burrs should



Secure knife in vise.

be the only work on that side. If you try to sharpen from the back side you may create a bevel that makes it difficult to get a smooth stroke.

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MORE USEFUL PRODUCTS FROM THE FARRIER-PRODUCTS™ GROUP

The farrierproducts[®] line continues to be enhanced by the addition of tools and other useful items. Here are a few things you can look forward to seeing in 2002.

Kerckhaert has added the Kings XT fronts to the racing plate line. This Turf shoe has a very low toe grab that is allowed on most North American tracks. The race plate line already has low and regular toe as well as the flush grab of the Kings plate.

Knife Sharpener – This is a diamond particle sharpener that has a solid shaft instead of the typical hollow shaft. Competitively priced, this farrierproducts[®] tool has received very positive reviews.

Saddle Horse Clincher – The first of a group of shoeing tools to come from FPD, the saddle horse clincher has the good feel of much higher priced tools, but a price tag that is mid-range. Made in the US, it is drop forged from good quality tool steel and assembled with attention to the working details.

The Model K aprons are now available in a flame-retardant material with leather patches. The apron is lighter than the all-leather style and the belt has snaps at the hip. It has the same basic design, giving good coverage in the inside of the legs with Velcro leg straps. Color is blue with black leather patches.

Watch for more products in the future including tools from Lopez, farrierproducts[®] and Bloom Forge. You should also check with us in the next few months on the Kerckhaert Triumph riding horse shoe.

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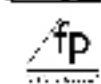
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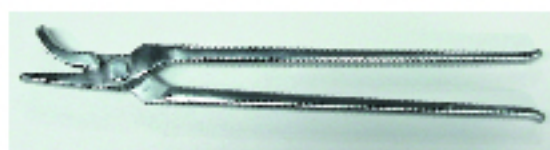
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Kerckhaert Kings XT
Race Plate

The Natural Angle

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Use both hands to make even, full strokes with sharpener.



Most of the hones need maintenance as well. It may feel like the hone has lost it's cutting ability when it is merely a build up of dirt that is causing the tool to fail. Most diamond particle hones can be cleaned with warm water and soap - thereby extending the effective life of the tool. Be sure to use clean water and dry your sharpening tool very carefully.



Flip knife and take off any burrs from backside.



You can do a pretty nice job of maintaining your knife's edge with hand tools. The power equipment might make the job a bit quicker, particularly when you are trying to establish the bevel and when you are trying to get a polish on your blade. n

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