

## **An Accidentally Omitted Reference on Advanced Riding**

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I recently visited Matt Lantz, reining trainer at Gran Blanc, Michigan. While we were talking about training and training books, he asked me if I included Bob Loomis's book, *Reining: The Art of Performance in Horses*, in my list of the best books in which to learn about advanced training. In my mind I froze. I knew Loomis's book is on my shelf. I also realized that, for reasons unknown, I hadn't included it in the reference list of *Teaching Yourself to Train Your Horse* (TYTYH), although I listed Al Dunning's good book and also directed the reader to Jack Brainard's book for excellent material on advanced training.

When I got home that evening I dug out Loomis's book and read it straight through. Somehow I had forgotten what a great book this is. I like Loomis's attitude and his descriptions and photographs better than any other book for advanced training, because (1) it is more explicitly instructive than most others, (2) the illustrations are attractive and useful, and (3) his philosophy of training makes me think of him as a kindred soul (not that this will cause him to turn any handsprings!). You will understand what I mean if you start with his Chapter 1, "How a Horse Thinks and How a Horseman Should Think." As another small but telling example, compare the remark at the front of Chapter 7 (p. 54), "The fastest way to accomplish the most is to go slowly" with my comment on p. 170 in *TYTYH*: "The best shortcut to the next stage of training is not omission of training steps but doing each step more carefully." Also, compare the way he works with young horses after he starts using a halter and lead rope with the pictures and explanations of the same in my book.

I don't have any particular criticisms of Loomis's book. There's a good deal of material in it that is specific to reining competition and its history, which may or may not be of great interest to general riders. But I don't know where you could find a better general discussion of advanced training than pp. 54-135. That's not very many pages to read, especially with the excellent illustrations taking up as much space as they do. Incidentally, my choice for the most fascinating photograph is on page 93.

To me, reining is somewhere near the very top among programs of advanced training of riding horses, no matter what kind of riding you wish to do. Reining (and cutting) horses seem to me to be the best trained, most relaxed, most predictable, most hard-working and willing of competitive horses. Reining trainers -- like Loomis, Dunning, Lantz, and many others -- seem to understand horses uncannily well, and know how to work with them without strife as effectively as any horse people do.

I recommend Loomis's book -- belatedly -- as probably the most explicit and clear description of how to continue with the advanced training of your horse. I still don't know how I overlooked it as I was finishing my book.

I feel really good about this because I have always believed there should be clear written accounts of how to handle and teach horses from foaling right through advanced riding or "finishing." It just isn't right that people should have to rely on accidents, their own discoveries, or word of mouth to find out how to do things with horses -- at either the beginning or the advanced end of training. There shouldn't be any secrets. Maybe I'm being exceedingly arrogant, but I believe that my book (how to be a decent beginner) and Loomis's (how to be a top professional) together cover this range of needs fairly well.

I am glad for web sites because they allow one to make the corrections and additions that in effect create the "next edition" of a book while the first edition is still being sold!

So: Good reading, good riding, and good training!

Loomis, Bob, with Kathy Kadash. 1991. *Reining: The Art of Performance in Horses*. EquiMedia Corporation. P. O. Box 90519. Austin, Texas 78709. \$34.95.

The distributor of Equimedia's books informs me by telephone that this book is currently "out of stock." In publisher's terms that phrase is supposed to mean it is not currently available but will be reprinted in the supposedly near future. If there were no plans to reprint it, it would be referred to as "out of print." Who knows, if enough people order it, maybe the restocking will be sooner rather than later. The telephone number for Equimedia is 512-821-0609. The distributor's phone number is 800-888-4741. A friend just told me that there are some used copies available through Amazon.com for less than \$34.95. Good luck!

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