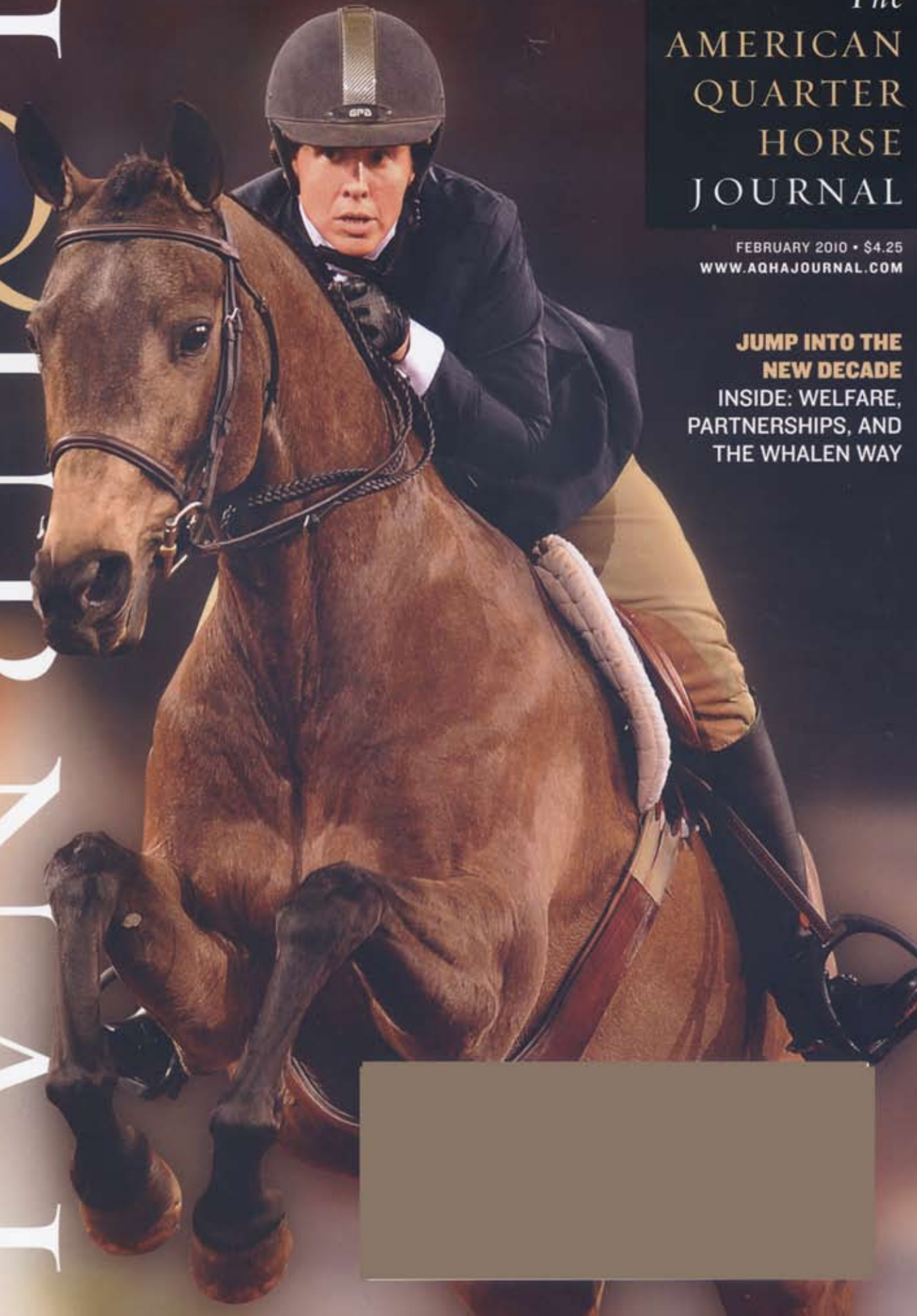


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WORLD SHOW TRAIL

A step-by-step analysis of the amateur trail prelims pattern

from the 2009 AQHA World Championship Show.

By Stephanie Land

FROM LOPE-OVERS TO TIGHT BACK-THROUGHS, THE TRAIL PATTERNS at the 2009 AQHA World Championship Show were no walk in the park. To complete the patterns with a minimum of faults took patience, precision and a solid plan.

Amateur exhibitor Jeffrey Johns of Paradise Valley, Arizona, finished eighth in the finals riding I Gotta Good Name, a horse owned by his mother, Susan Johns. Jeffrey and his trainer, AQHA Professional Horseman and judge Jim Searles of Scottsdale, Arizona, sat down with the *Journal* at the World Show to discuss Jeffrey's approach to the amateur trail prelims pattern. The video coverage there included part of an audio analysis of Jeffrey's go. Here is more of their conversation.

First Look

Jim: This was a great layout by the course designer, Tim Kimura; very challenging. It shows the degree of difficulty for both horse and rider to allow them to really show their talent. There's a lot of flow to this pattern, which allows the judges to really score each maneuver.

Jeffrey: At this point, while I was waiting for the judges to nod to me, I wanted to make sure my horse was paying attention and not looking around. I went ahead and got his attention. I wanted to get a good trot-off to make sure I was able to clear those poles from the very beginning.

1. Jog-Over

Jim: Jeffrey did a really nice job going over the (first set of) poles. He had a little check, a chip on one of the logs, but he kept his momentum going all the way through it.

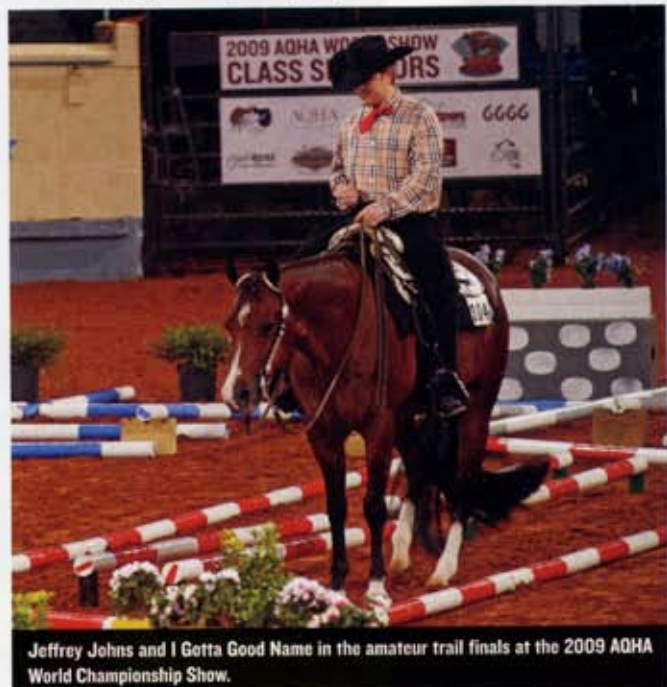
Jeffrey: I used my inside leg to wrap around that tight little turn, but I sat up really tall.

I wanted to have impulsion but I kind of sucked back a little bit to make sure I could get stopped in that tight box.

2. & 3. Lope-Overs

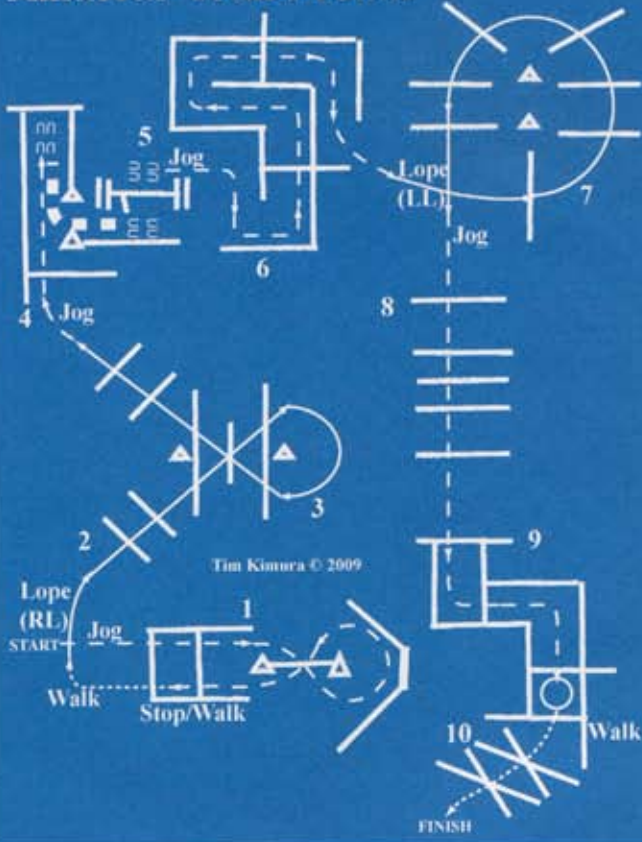
Jeffrey: I sat back and was able to get a really good lope-off and get prepared for the next obstacle. Once I found that first spot (over the poles), I just sat back and looked straight ahead. It was important to look straight ahead, because if I looked to the right and anticipated my turn, I would get in too tight (around the turn) and hit the poles. I found my spot, sat back and let the horse find his way.

Jim: At this point, the horse was very willingly guided. That's a big part of getting a good maneuver score, not only



Jeffrey Johns and I Gotta Good Name in the amateur trail finals at the 2009 AQHA World Championship Show.

Amateur Trail Prelim



to avoid hitting the poles, but to make it look pretty and correct, and he did that on this obstacle. From there, he just got his mind focused on the next maneuver.

4. Back-Through

Jim: Jeffrey really maneuvered that back-through very correct. That is a really difficult maneuver, and it requires a little more time and effort and thought process to it. He was probably a little more conservative than what I like to see, but he made it precise.

Jeffrey: The back was one of the more challenging parts of the pattern. The opening between the two cones was very tight; you really had to watch out for the base cones and not step on them, because they stuck out a little farther; and you had to watch out for the standard of the gate and make sure not to hit it. I did this a little slowly, so, I might not have plussed this obstacle, but at least it was correct.

5. Gate

Jim: When you get into an obstacle like the gate and you have more time to think, the nerves start to set in. This is really where you have to control your nerves and really pay attention to what you are doing because the horse can feel all that energy. Jeffrey's execution was an example of a very correct obstacle maneuver.

Jeffrey: Going over that pole, I wanted to make sure I gave my horse enough time to see the raised pole there at the gate and then let him find his way and just support him over it.

6. Jog-Through

Jeffrey: I got his attention a little too much after the gate,

but I wanted him to get a good trot-off here to make it through the serpentine with enough impulsion to get over the poles without hitting them. I really had to use my inside leg to make it around the turn. I made sure to sit up straight, use my inside leg, try not to use too much of my hand and just keep him on my leg most of the time. He listened to me really well there.

7. Lope-Over

Jim: At this point (through the lope-overs) the horse and rider were really in sync. Jeffrey really stayed centered on his horse, his hand in the center of the neck, finding his spots, with great flow. To me, this was a really good example of a good maneuver score. The main thing is not to think too far ahead. There are 10 maneuvers, so if you get a hit or tick on one, you have to just keep riding because there are a lot of plus-1's still out there to go get.

8. Jog-Over

Jeffrey: Breaking down to the trot, I had to have enough impulsion to make it over those poles. It was a very close, tight breakdown. And then I made sure I got all the way into the box before I stopped.

9. Turn in the Box

Jim: Jeffrey really entered the box very well. He got stuck a little bit on the turn, and used a little more pull than he needed to, but once again, nerves were setting in. He had a really good trip up to this point and he was kind of looking for the end.

Jeffrey: (Going) to the box, I just wanted to have a good solid stop and not stop too early because I would have hit that raised pole right there at the front of the box. In the turn, my hand came up and it was a little jerky. I think my nerves were getting to me at that point because I was having a pretty good go.

10. Walkover

Jim: He stayed up for one or two strides after the square and allowed his horse to clear the pole. He went from a correct or zero score on that box right into a plus-1. He knew he needed a better box, but he went in there and he finished with a plus-1 walkout. That's what you need to do in trail patterns is ride each maneuver separately. He really exits and finishes this course well, just a really nice, smooth pattern.

Jeffrey: During the walkovers, I just thought "slow," and I was in no rush to get out. (A good trick is to) keep thinking there are one or two imaginary walkovers after the last one to make sure the horse clears it with his hind feet, and make sure you don't sit down too early. Overall, I was really happy with my go and happy with my horse. 🐾

Stephanie Land was AQHA's A.H. "Bud" Ferber marketing intern for fall 2009. To comment write to aqhajrnl@aqha.org. To learn more about AQHA's internships, go to www.aqha.com/association/who/openings.html

WATCH IT

Watch Jeffrey's go after this analysis. You can find it in the 2009 World Show coverage at: <http://tinyurl.com/yc4kgaj>.