



Horse Profiling: The Secret to Motivating Equine Athletes: Using Emotional Conformation, Behavioral Genetics, and Herd Dynamics to Choose Training Methods, ... Performance, and Hone Competitive Strategy

Calvin L. Carter, Kerry Thomas

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It is no secret that speed, stamina, jumping ability, and athletic prowess depend on the horse's physical ability to perform—to run, stop, turn, balance, and to be powerful or graceful. However, the world has seen many “great” athletic bodies, human and horse, fail to reach their true potential, while others, perhaps thought to be less great in form and function, reach the pinnacle of their sport or discipline.

In the world of human athletes, we might claim hard work, “grit,” or “heart” as the force greater than muscle that propels them to the top. But the horse doesn't have performance goals in the way we do, so what is it that motivates one racehorse to leave the rest of the field behind to cross the finish line first?

Early on in his research of wild horse herds in Wyoming and Montana, Kerry Thomas determined that what he calls “Emotional Conformation”—not physical conformation—governs equine herd dynamics. At that moment he understood that, regardless of breed or career, an Emotional Conformation Profile could dictate in large part the success or failure of the horse in the human environment—including performance sports and competition.

Focusing on this research, Kerry began to cultivate ways in which a horse's “mental capacity” could be identified and then “conditioned” toward a given goal. In these pages, Kerry explains how it is possible to determine if a horse has what it takes inside him to make what he has on the outside great. Can your racing prospect handle distance? Does your event horse have the “finish” to clear that last enormous cross-country obstacle when his legs are tired? Is your reining horse capable of maintaining focus in the face of large crowds and multiple distractions? These are the questions Horse Profiling helps answer.

This book begins by teaching you how to enter the “Equine Circle”—a kind of horse society with established rules and hierarchies. This, in essence, enables you to peer through a window into your horse's psyche. How he communicates with others—with more or less body language or intent—helps you identify the mental and emotional characteristics that make him “trainable”...or not.

In addition, you'll discover the P-Type grading system, which assigns letter grades according to a horse's instinctual tendencies (basic and acquired), and his ability to handle environmental stimuli while in motion. The P-Type grade adds valuable information to the Emotional Conformation Profile, enabling you to work with the performance horse best positioned to allow you to make efficient use of time and money, successfully propel your riding career forward, and ultimately, do what is best for the horse in terms of his mental and physical well-being.

Finally, Kerry examines what he has found to be the eight key causes of behavioral problems in two main

categories—what he calls potential withholds and equine mental illness—which can derail an equine athlete’s career and indefinitely suspend a horse’s healthy, social existence.

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