

Chiron Riding – more than just riding

Almost everyone has seen it, on TV, in a movie, maybe even in real life: that instance of almost inconceivably harmonious interaction between horse and rider that makes it seem as though there are two bodies, but only one spirit. The astonishing performance that makes one believe the horse and rider have a telepathic bond for such consummate perfection to be the result. This is the goal of Chiron Riding and has led to its name.



Chiron was the name of a centaur in Greek mythology. Centaurs have the body of a horse and the torso of a human -- a truly fitting image for consummate horse-rider communication and harmony. The creator of the Chiron Jumping Method was Rolf Becher, a German trainer dissatisfied with the heavy style of riding that was becoming popular. Becher's system, based on Federico Caprilli's forward seat style, creates lightness and willingness in the horse.

Our modern day showjumping- and hunter-seat style also evolved from Caprilli's forward seat -- so how is this forward seat different? The Chiron forward seat is based on a triangle, the most stable geometric form. Here are the details:

- Feet are flat in the stirrups to the arch of foot, preventing springiness, and instead creating stability.
- Shoulders are low, hips are far back, and hands are forward on the neck of the horse about a hand's width below the crest (and move forward during the jump).
- Shoulder, knee and heel are on a vertical line.
- Calf is vertical, and combined with the horizontal foot, deep in the stirrup, creates great stability. Springiness comes from the knees and hips, and balance comes from the feet.
- Stirrup length is shorter than what is often seen today.

Modern Chiron advocates such as Peter Speckmaier, a certified Chiron Jumping Instructor from Germany, have taken this method one step further and created a unique holistic approach to horsemanship. By combining natural living conditions, proper nutrition, barefoot hoofcare, humane saddle and tack fitting, harmonious horse-human interrelationships, and Chiron jumping training, a truly optimal foundation is created for performance horses.

Consequently, a Chiron Riding Clinic is a bit different and covers topics outside the square. Each day of the clinic starts off with theory about the horse's anatomy, psychology, and nervous system. The second half of each day is riding and learning the Forward Seat. This position allows the riders to remain in a solid, secure seat while allowing the horses total freedom to move. Small jumps are set up in such a manner that the horses learn never to "run out" from a jump. Riders approach each jump in the forward seat and let the horses have total freedom of their head and neck. Of primary importance to the approach is rhythm. A common coaching advice of a Chiron Instructor would be: "More Rhythm!" and "No Rhythm, No Fun!"