

Competition Report Cards

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Original publication date: 2020

First appearing in: Horse Network

Reports cards are an easy-to-use method of tracking a child's progress during the school year. They can also be designed to monitor the progress of horse and rider in the show ring.

“Report cards” have been applied in sports such as gymnastics, figure skating, football, etc. to provide athletes with detailed feedback about their performance that can then be studied and improved upon afterward.

I first came across this method of providing feedback a few years ago when I was reading through notes written by a respected football coach. This individual coached the receivers group, and after every game, he would re-watch the film and provide each of his players with a report detailing what they did well and areas to improve. The players loved this feedback and it allowed them to progress steadily throughout the season. Of course, it is worth applying this to horse sports.

The most common variable in the jumper ring, and what people tend to pay attention to, is the placing and number of faults. But these variables do not provide a detailed picture of what happened in the ring. If there were time faults, was that the result of: Rideability issues? A bad plan made during the course walk? The horse jumping too big? Etc?

Similarly, the difference between zero faults and eight faults can be relatively minor (e.g. two light rails at the end of the course) or major (e.g. the horse demolished a double combination).

To counter this and ensure riders understand what issues arose on course, trainers will speak to students after each round and analyze their ride. Although helpful, this feedback is often given in a stressful and rushed environment (immediately after a round), which limits the rider's uptake of information. Furthermore, we know that people only remember a few pieces of information at a time, while everything else is either forgotten or only partially internalized.

To ensure riders have a more detailed analysis they can refer to after the fact, it would be great if report cards became widely adopted in our sport.

I began using these reports a while ago when tracking the developments of a horse and rider, and found them quite helpful. I would rewatch video of the round at the end of the day and make my notes as well as score the overall performance. For each jump, a grade is provided as well as specific comments that help explain the ride.

Combined with video of their round, students can review this information later and study what went right and what went wrong. See example below.

COMPETITION REPORT CARD

Location: [Redacted] Date: [Redacted] Horse & Rider: [Redacted]

Score: 12/22 Percent: 55% (4)

O - Oxer
V - Vertical
T - Triple bar
W - Water

I = Jump not visible
+ = Well ridden
- = Failed the ride or miscommunication
E = Error in decision-making
G = Made a GREAT ride

Time: 2:00 pm Result: 9th/42 Time/Faults: 8/41.562 Competition: High AM Jumper Classic [Redacted]

JUMP	DESIGN	COMMENTS	RESULT	GRADE
1	V	25 m/min too slow to Jump 1		-
2	O	Got on pace between Jumps 1 & 2		+
3	V	Good job being patient here		+
4	T			+
5A	O	Shift off ground		+
5B	O	Bad right drift!!		-
6	O	Not visible		I
7	V	Patient!!		+
8	O	Got lucky here. Threw body @ base	hard rub	-
9	O	Same thing again. Be patient!!		-
10A	V			+
10B	O	Great job managing drift		G
10C	V			G
11	V	Don't get into a fight. Be patient!		-
12	O			+
13	V	Super!		G
JUMP-OFF				
2	O	40 m/min too slow to jump		-
3	V	Threw body & pushed horse into jump	Front legs hit rail	-
6	O	Not visible		I
7	V	Went way too wide between 6 & 7		E
10B	O	Unbalanced coming into combo		-
10C	V	Unbalanced - horse didn't have a chance	Front legs hit rail	-
14	V			+
12	O	Great ride to last jump. Patient, balanced & impulse		G

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A report card template can be downloaded from the www.timwordentraining.com resources page.