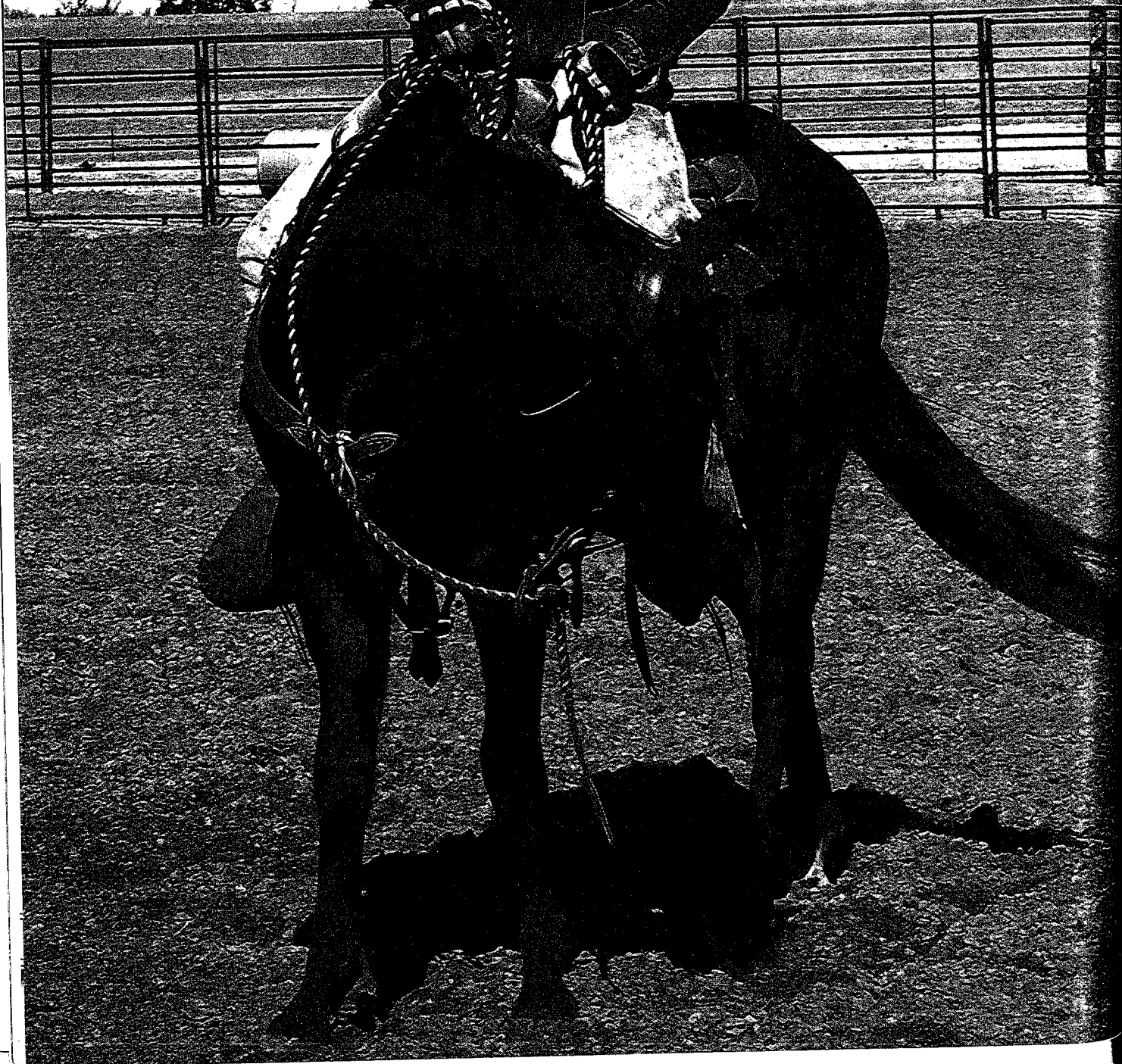


PERFECT PRACTICE

One of the four
must-have maneuvers
in Haugen's regimen
is lateral flexion.



Haugen's hot list

Trainer Phil Haugen walks you through the four maneuvers he puts in all his barrel prospects. article and photos by Julie Mankin

Why is it that such a staggering percentage of horses started under saddle by Phil Haugen advance to fame and fortune in the barrel futurity industry?

Well, many reasons come to mind, but there are three elements within Haugen's tried-and-true training regimen that stand out in particular. First, a Haugen-started colt will check down softly. Second, it knows how to step across and underneath itself, and third, that horse knows how to hustle out of a turn.

Softness—which leads to the most efficient response from a horse—is a major weapon in Haugen's arsenal. To get a horse soft, Haugen builds his training and warm-up routine around four specific maneuvers: lateral flexion, vertical flexion, lateral hindquarter and shoulder movement.

Haugen says he believes these four skill sets belong in every prospect's knowledge base, and that every barrel racer should ask for them when warming up a horse.

He says part of the reason he goes through this checklist each time he steps on a colt is psychological.



Haugen's second lesson is teaching a colt to step its hindquarters around.

"By doing these warm-up exercises, these colts don't anticipate me getting on them with going fast," he says.

Instead, they relax, which makes things a little easier, considering he's working with frisky 2-year-olds on brisk winter days.

Haugen teaches his colts lateral flexion by asking them to bend at the neck and bring their head around toward his knee. To do this, he runs his hand down the inside rein and brings it directly to his thigh with his thumb pointed up.

To get the best result, he says don't tweak the rein, tug on the rein or pull aimlessly—bring that rein back to your thigh as though you were stabbing your leg with a knife.

As soon as your horse gives to that pressure, release. Only with a defined, easily felt amount of pressure can the actual release produce the desired effect. Haugen says to remember to do this on both sides and keep in mind that your horse will probably be naturally softer on one side than the other, so you may have to work on the stiffer side more often.

One of Haugen's other crucial moves is vertical flexion. In addition to asking for the same softness at the poll as in the lateral move, this

entails collection, or “framing up,” and backing up softly.

Colts will have a tendency to get stuck and brace on the bit before they know how to back up, and that’s where Haugen really gets them soft. Instead of battling with their mouth, he simply teaches them that when he moves his feet, they should be moving their feet.

“When a horse sticks his feet, I don’t pull harder with my reins—I just kick harder,” Haugen says. “If your horse’s head comes up, use your feet and say, ‘come back to me’ with your reins.”

In addition to one-rein stops, a great maneuver for getting optimal softness is to back a horse in a circle.

“I use my outside rein and step that front end around,” he says. “It’s harder for a colt to do this than backing straight.”

The third technique learned by all of Haugen’s colts is to move their hindquarters each direction, and fourth, to laterally move their shoulders.

He teaches a horse to kick its hind end around, and then he opens that inside rein and brings its shoulders around the same direction that its hindquarters moved.

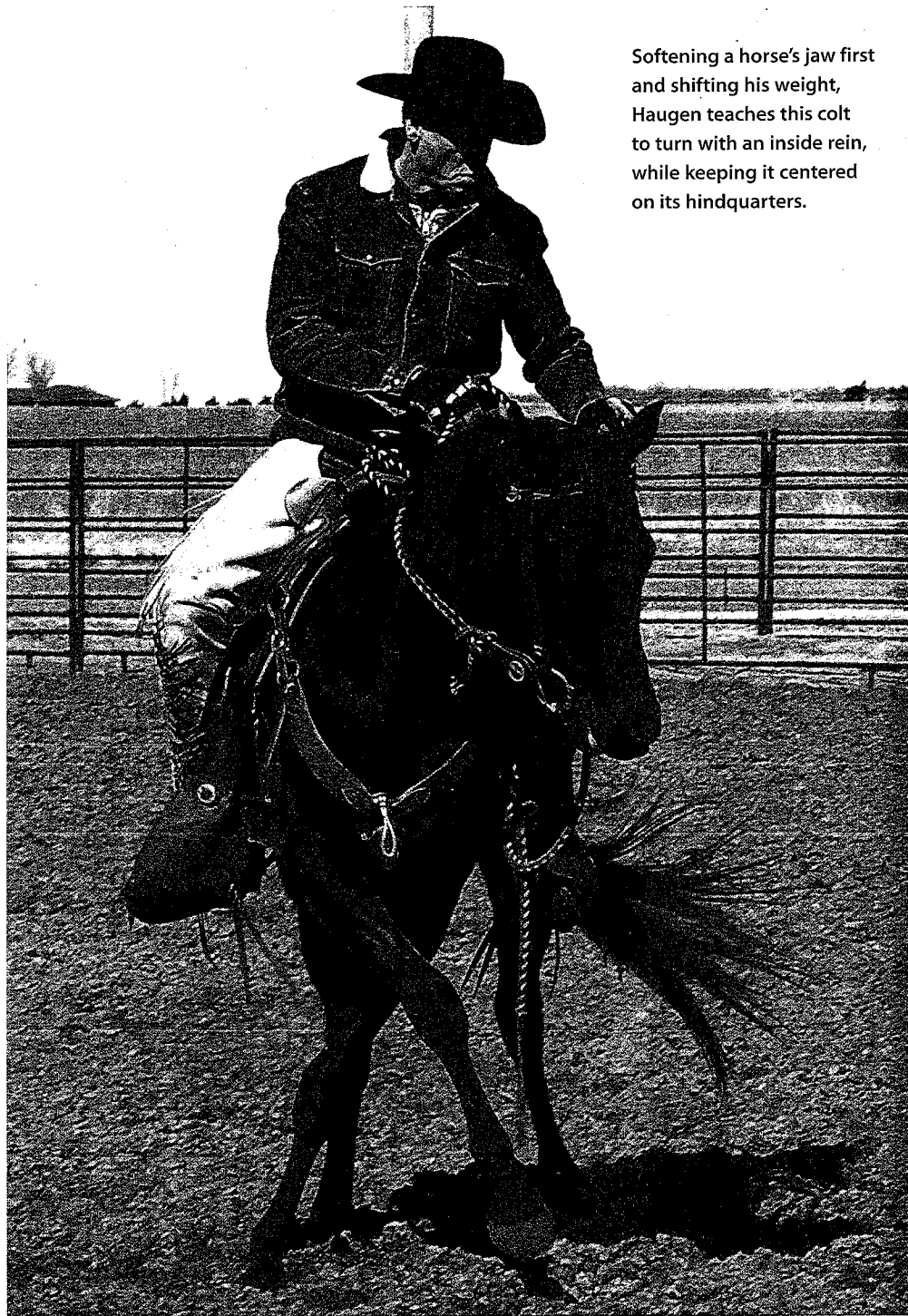
Alternatively, without the hindquarter action, Haugen will frame a colt up, sit down with his weight in his outside stirrup and ask it to come around with its shoulders.

By asking for a give of the jaw, then lifting the rein and looking at the horse’s hip, he shows the horse how to step underneath itself and turn with its weight balanced.

“Teaching a horse to turn like this with a single rein is a huge advantage over teaching the horse to turn from the nose or with the indirect rein because it teaches the horse to balance through turns instead of falling on its forehand, as it can when it learns to turn by following its nose,” Haugen says.

The advantage to utilizing this method is that if the horse stiffens against outside rein pressure, you’re already in place with the inside hand asking the horse to come around and soften. In addition, the horse is learning to engage the inside hind leg from the very first turns it makes as a baby—and as a finished barrel horse, will end up with more balanced turns on the pattern.

Haugen’s theories lend themselves to a lot of subtle techniques that will pay off later. For instance, he reinforces the horse positively for various correct answers, including softness. By



Softening a horse’s jaw first and shifting his weight, Haugen teaches this colt to turn with an inside rein, while keeping it centered on its hindquarters.

getting the horse to give at the jaw or hip, he can ask for anything from a stop to a turn, or simply the give.

“I have to plan ahead and decide if I want the horse to keep walking through the pickup of the rein, or if I’m going to ask for a halt,” he says. “If you play with this for a while, you’ll find that the lift of the hand starts to mean, ‘hey, get organized, I’m going to ask for something,’

instead of ‘halt’ or ‘slow down.’”

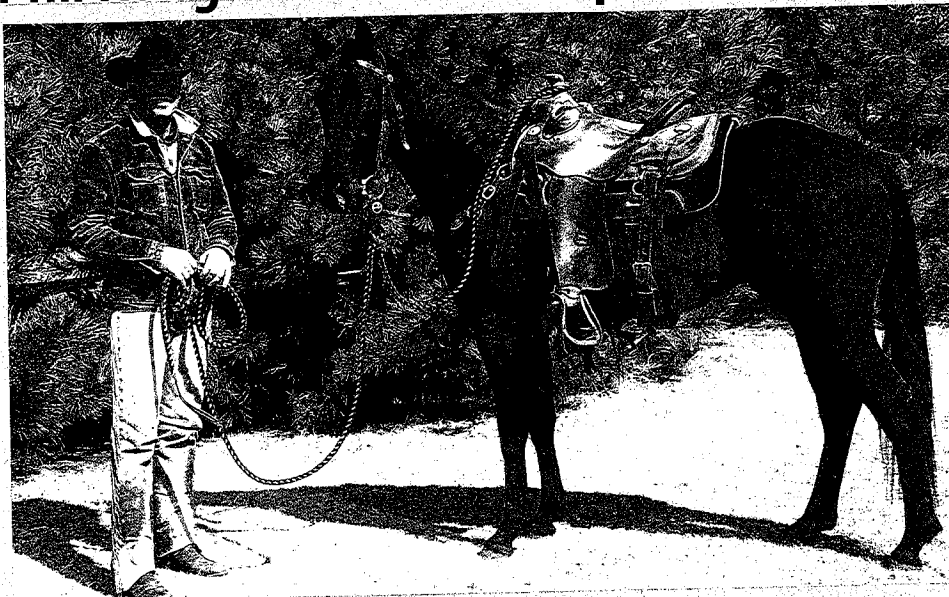
Another guideline Haugen follows is to always change direction with a horse when he’s done with a maneuver.

“A horse needs to be back on his hocks because those are his drivers,” Haugen says. “Never stop or back up and then ride forward.”

In addition to the incredible balance his

PERFECT PRACTICE

Phil Haugen horsemanship



North Dakota native Phil Haugen has been working with horses for more than 25 years and currently operates Phil Haugen Horsemanship out of Weatherford, Okla., where he lives with his wife, Bridget, and two children.

During his early rodeo career, Haugen qualified for the Badlands Circuit Finals and Prairie Circuit Finals Rodeos, and won the coveted PRCA Linderman Award in 1989 for his prowess on broncs and rope horses.

Since focusing on his colt-starting program, in which Haugen follows a basic tenet of keeping prospects relaxed and confident, he's ridden for everyone from Jud Little to Kenna Squires and Bo Hill. Because of the emphasis on flexion and hustle that his colts get, a large number of barrel horses started by Haugen have seen success, including some earning more than \$150,000 in December 2007.

colts achieve, Haugen's prospects learn early to hustle out of turns. The common exercise of rolling back off a fence and going the other direction is a great way to reinforce this hustle.

"Position the horse to turn, and then just hustle off," Haugen says of 2-year-olds. "The key is not the turn, it's the hustle out of the turn."

Another way he reinforces hustle in his colts is by never letting a horse break down into a trot from a small circle.

At the 2008 BFA World Championships in Oklahoma City, Okla., several Haugen-started horses hit paydirt, including Chocado's Cash in the Superstakes, Fantasia Fame, Kerney and Special Kinda Dixie in the Futurity, and Six Bullion and Famous Ed in the Derby.

In the photographs with this story, taken on a frigid day in February 2008, Haugen was training a 2-year-old Dash Ta Fame stallion sent to him by Brooke Catalini.

Haugen is scheduling private clinics for 2009 that will offer substantial one-on-one attention on both rider and horse.

For more information on the clinics or to order "Foundation and Fundamentals," Haugen's three-DVD set detailing his roundpen program, visit philhaughenhorsemanship.com.

You may also call (405) 663-2626 or e-mail haugenhq@htswireless.com.

"Keep him upright and driving forward," Haugen says. "When he does keep driving forward, then ease him into a bigger circle to reward him. I don't scold by doing little circles too much. I expect effort—out of myself, my kids, my horses. If I feel they made an effort, I'll find a way to reward them somehow."

It would seem as though Haugen piles quite a curriculum on a youngster that may have only sported a saddle for a few weeks. But despite the mental stress of learning, his colts never get overwhelmed or frustrated. Instead,

Charmayne James on Barrel Racing



Charmayne James burst on to the professional rodeo scene in 1984, winning the first of 11 world championships before her fifteenth birthday. For the next 19 consecutive years, she qualified for every National Finals Rodeo and became the most decorated female equestrian of all time.

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In 2003, she began to devote herself to training horses and riders with the same single-minded determination that earned her more than \$2 million in the arena. "My lifelong passion for running barrels kept me studying and working to find ways to make it easier for my horses to win. In this book, I share what my years of experience have taught me."

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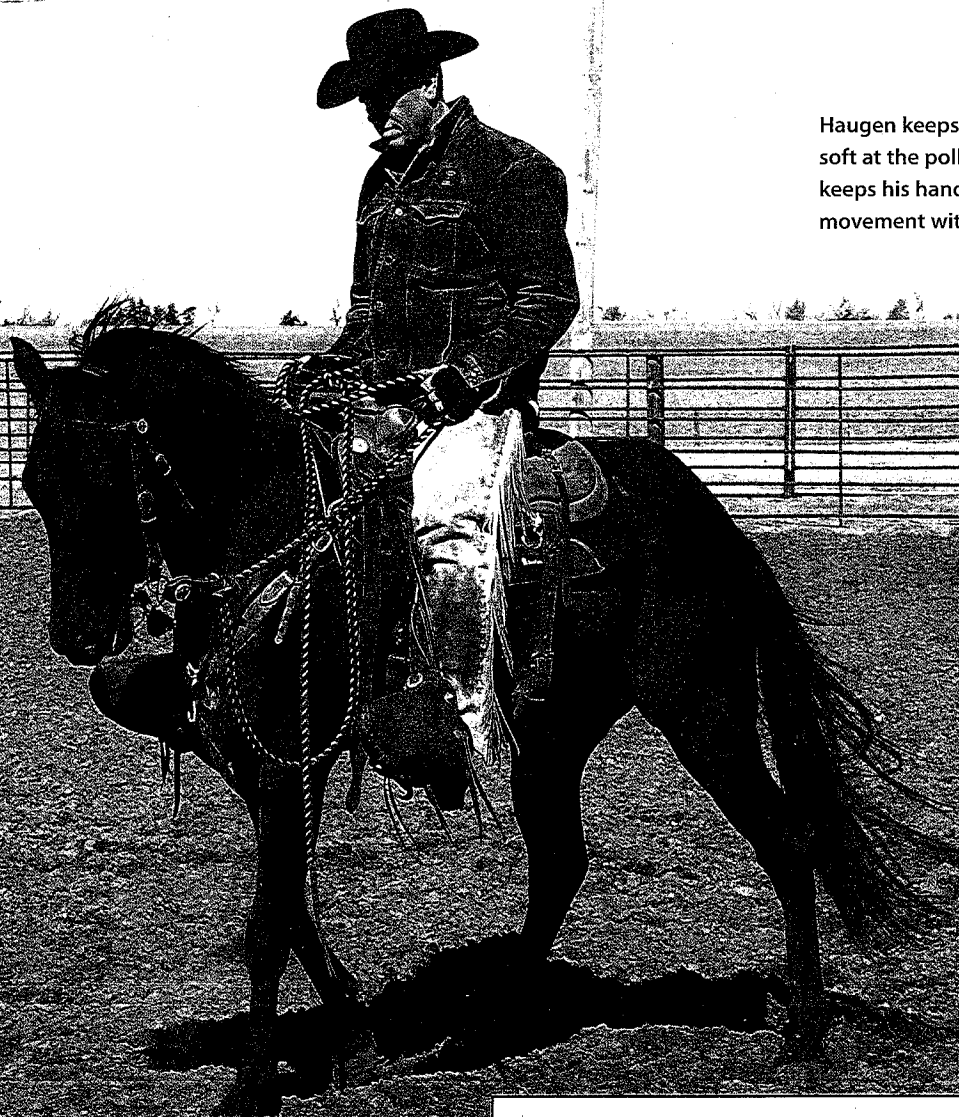
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Haugen keeps a colt framed up and soft at the poll and, when backing, keeps his hands steady and asks for movement with his feet.



they continually respond with their heads level and ears forward. His reward system is largely responsible for this.

“Loping is a reward for my horses,” Haugen says. “Loping a nice-size circle is the easiest thing they do all day.”

How many older barrel horses do you know that can’t even be loped in a circle? Haugen says he feels that a horse that can’t settle enough to lope a circle will never be a big winner.

“When a horse is relaxed, you can relax, and the horse feels that. It goes back through them,” he says. “You being relaxed builds confidence in the horse.”

If your colt is a little chargey or loping too fast, try breaking him into smaller circles until he relaxes, or do a one-rein stop or two and head back out. This method of teaching a horse that he can stay relaxed is a big key to Haugen’s successful program, and it applies to any age horse.

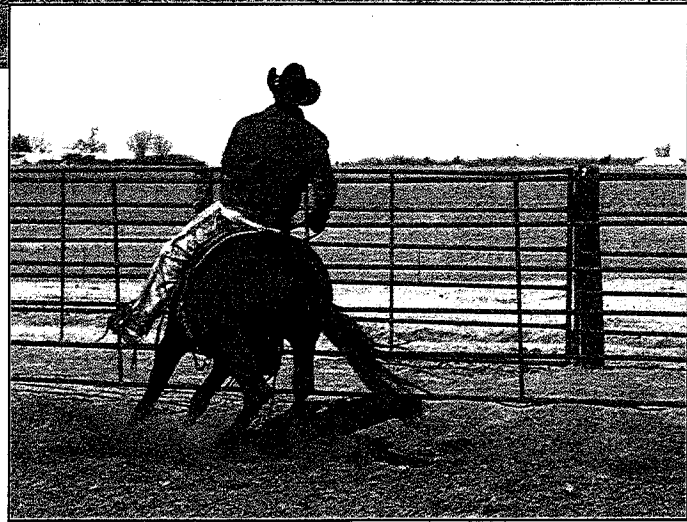
“Everyone who has a horse is a trainer,” he

says. “Anytime you catch a horse or handle a horse, you are training. For instance, my horses know that when I drop the reins, they can relax. It’s consistent.”

Getting back to Haugen’s four essential exercises, they do more than just get a colt thinking and beget softness. They even help older horses with stiffness.

“If you get rid of that stiffness in any age horse, you’ll fight fewer health and chiropractic issues,” Haugen says. “It’s just like you first thing in the morning. If a horse has a stiffness, he’ll compensate for it in another area.”

The benefits of softness, after all, are unlimited. When you can get that great feel from a horse, you have an added advantage psychologically.



Haugen hustles a colt out of every turn, whether it’s on the fence or in the middle of the arena.

“By getting that softness, if you’re running to the first barrel 400 miles per hour, and you lift that hand and sit down, you can have confidence your horse will listen,” Haugen says. “If you don’t have that confidence, you’re not relaxed, and you’ll ride tight, and it’s hard to win that way.”