

Thomas Herding Technique

Discovering the Communicated Equine

A View From The Hoof

The Psychology of a Race Horse, the *Magic Moment*

By:

Kerry M. Thomas

Founder of Thomas Herding Technique

The use of video and photos is an essential part of my work, especially so as our most popular service is Video Performance Profiling. During the intensive, mostly frame-by-frame break downs, I am searching for clues that will help me begin to identify the ingredients that make up the "who" of the horse, their Emotional Conformation Profile.

In no other discipline are the Herd Dynamics more prevailing, especially over a Classic Distance Race, which to me is the only real racing, than within the rhythm of motion of the Thoroughbred Race Horses moving together. Herd animals moving in a group reminds me tactically like a flock of birds or school of bait-fish suddenly changing directions all in unison, in the name of survival.

I am often asked what it is that I look for, and the answer is always the same; I am searching for what I call **The Magic Moment**. It's the nearly invisible moments where the rhythm of herd motion becomes impacted by individual triggers, individual psychologies. As the horses move and begin to settle, as the chaos from the *launching* from the starting gate begins to ripple out, indeed, as the ebb and flow, the seamless, nearly timeless beauty of the herd in motion gets its collective rhythm, a new mystery begins to emerge.

It's a defining moment when the unit begins to break into pods, it is not relative to their space from one to the other, but rather relative to the space they put between them as individuals, the invisible space that is the herd hierarchy. This is not a physical act at first, but rather a decision of self placement that we see emerge as if an image in a mist coming toward us..., only being physically affected as a result of decision. (In order to advance your race horse, we work toward affecting the decision process on an Emotional Conformation level first, so that the physical aftermath, is what we want.)

The **Magic Moment** for each individual comes when they either allow themselves to get *sticky, buddying-up* with another and allow themselves and their space to be managed and affected by one or more, or for some and more definitive, the horse begins the managing of space, and their impact on it. These are the emerging leaders, they will often be challenged by another, making the essence of herd motion not a physical battle as much as a battle of wills.

For me in profiling the Emotional Conformation of the athlete's, I seek to discover *these magical moments*, for the keys to unlocking either what holds them back, or *what trains them forward*, lay within their latent trigger points; do they release, do they stick, do they lose pace because of an inability to communicate their position..., these info-bits are vital allies I use when developing a profile, and indeed, a strategic series of patterns-of-motion exercises fitted to the individual psychology of your athlete.

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Thomas Herding Technique
206 Homeville Road Cochranville, PA 19330
Telephone: 610-593-4889
Email: stablemaster@thomasherdingtechnique.com

