

Build Your Cutting Run in a Positive Direction



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That's What the Judges Want to See

I recently had two exciting knowledge building experiences. Both helped me improve the way I think about showing.



My first event was an NCHA Cutting Academy Grassroots Clinic held in my hometown of Brenham, Texas. (If you EVER have an opportunity to attend one in your area, DO NOT MISS IT). Russell McCord, the NCHA Director of Judges, led the morning classroom session. Matt Gaines commented with Russell during live works in the afternoon. Both did a super job.

My second learning venture was viewing the new NCHA DVD, "How to Score Higher". The two DVDs span over two-and-one-half hours and they are information rich. Russell McCord, Matt Gaines, Roger Wagner, Lindy Burch, Tom Lyons, Chubby Turner, and Zack T. Wood, Jr. share their insights on how to be more competitive in the show arena.

Because the information was so insightful for both, and went hand-in-hand, my purpose here is to highlight the recurring themes taught by these world-class people.

Here are some of the main tips:

1. **Judges want to root for you.** They want you to do well so they can give you a high score. Keep the judge in a positive frame of mind. That means, put them in a position to give you as many pluses as possible on the credit side of the score sheet. Study the credits. Know what you can do to boost your score and be proactive.

Make credit-earning cuts. Cut in the "middle zone" of the arena, as opposed to cutting on the sides of the arena. Make clean cuts. Be aggressive and drive way out past the front of the herd. (This point was stressed repeatedly.)

Take advantage of "free points". Free points are things you can control. For example, back to your cuts ... the judge gives you from a +1, +half, 0, -half, -1 for your herdwork for each cow. Extended working time is another example of a "free point" for run content.

Evaluate what has already happened in your run between cattle and proceed accordingly. After the first cow, you are either on a damage control mission or you are in a position to steadily build your run. After the second cow, decide how to manage your time remaining. A great way to think about the third cut is make smart, bold moves to finish strong when possible.

Higher scores are about risk and reward. The higher the risk, the higher the reward.

2. **Do not give judges "take-aways" which are penalty points or run content negatives regarding things you can control.** The following situations cause judges to start thinking about a score in a descending way:

Your hand cannot be moved up a horses neck. Do not cause a judge to wonder if it is. Make sure you have plenty of slack in your bridle reins.

Don't hold on too long or set your horse back on the cut. (These errors are very common and really frowned upon.)

Reduce the number of times or eliminate going to the outer zones of the arena. This is true for cuts and for working the cow. When you go out there, your score tends to go down.

3. **Don't do little things that annoy judges:**

Don't be late.

Don't throw dirt around and into the coffee cup of the judge before you ride to the herd. Bad impression. (-:

Don't back-up into the panels in front of the judges stand.

4. Be on a mission to methodically improve:

Study your score sheet by yourself.

Plan to improve. Turn the minus areas into checks. Turn the checks into pluses.

Equipped with the judge's impressions of your run, go watch the video alone to understand. Why alone? Your job is to study ... learn ... and not get lots of opinions. After you have studied alone, then look at the score sheet and video again with your trainer.

Learn how to be more competitive by understanding how judges think and champions think. Then, chunk your skills in groups and methodically work to improve them.

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