

Cynaguan Mounted Combat Skills Workshop – What I remember...

Else Hunrvogt, OP, OWGS

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- I would like to thank the patient ponies without whom this would not be possible or nearly as much fun.
- I would like to thank my fellow students for being great to learn with and being willing to share our early efforts with the world at large.

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Part I – Falling

11/17-18/12

The simplified rules for falling for equestrians are as follows:

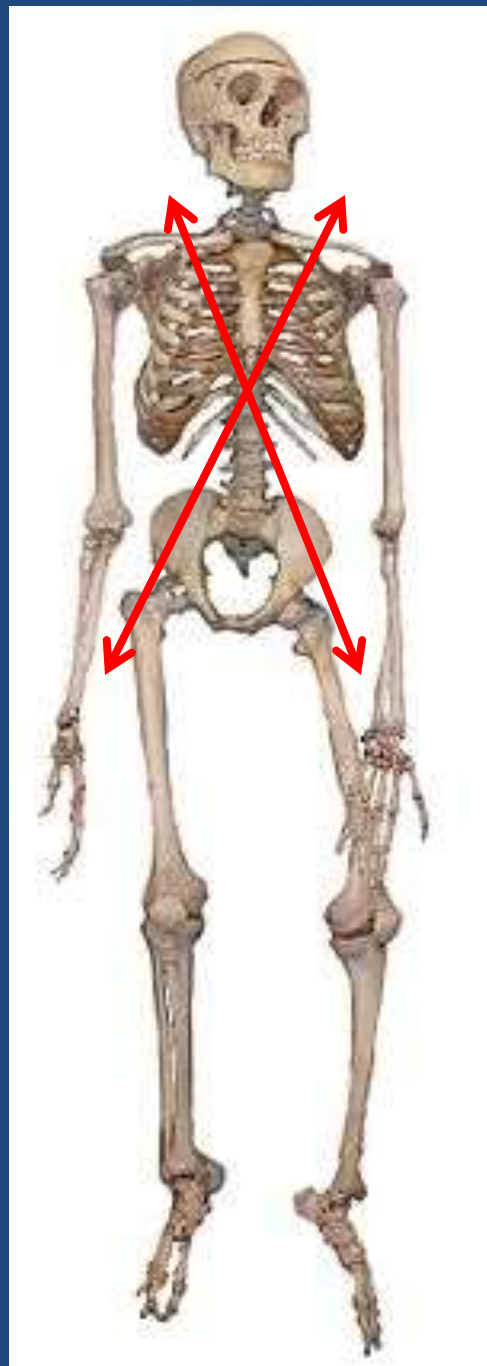
1. Falling and tumbling is its own art form best learned from a trained instructor.
2. Becoming familiar with rolling from a squatting or standing position is a good way to work up the confidence to fall from horseback.

3. Curl up into a ball. Tuck in all appendages to your torso such as arms, legs, head/neck.
4. Avoid planting the hands, elbows, etc. when landing.

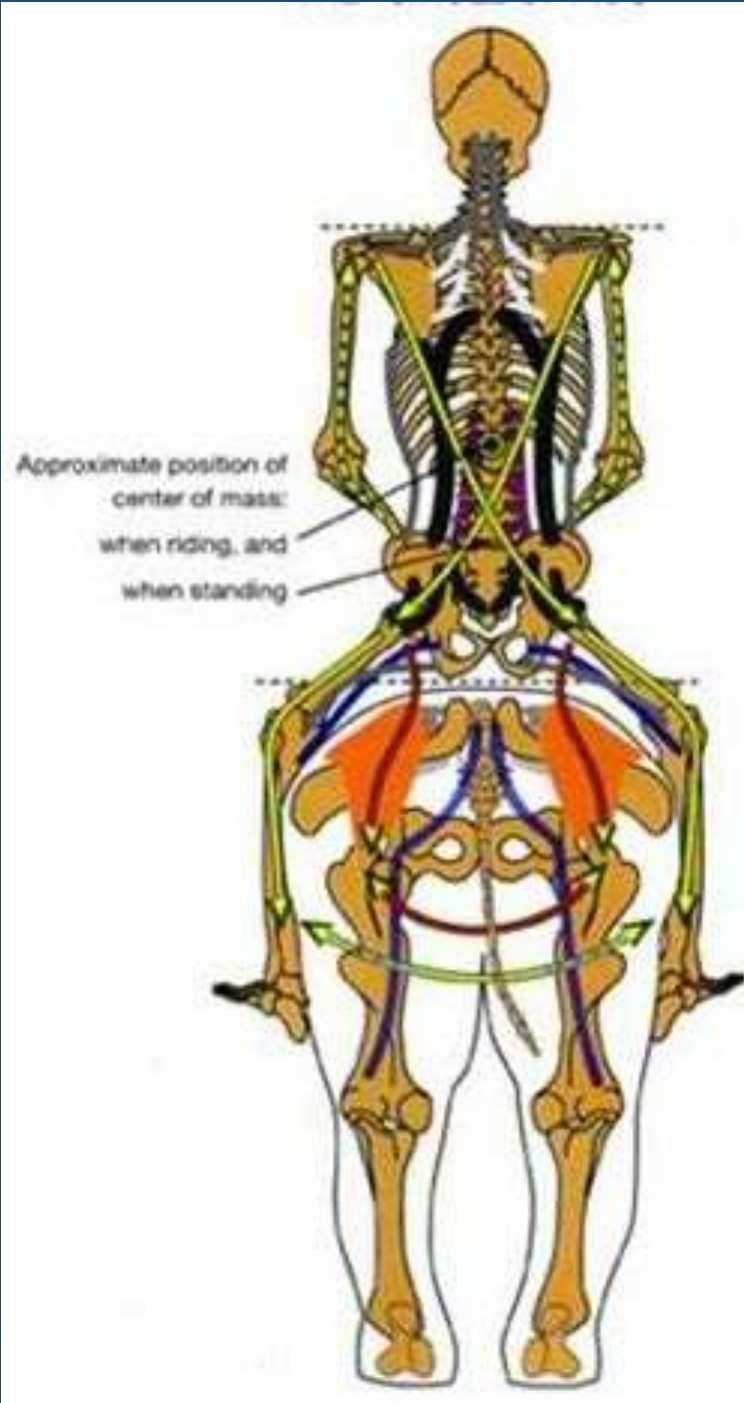


5. Whether rolling from the head or the tail, work diagonally across your body. Roll from right shoulder to left hip, left shoulder to right hip, right hip to left shoulder, or left hip to right shoulder. This helps to protect the spine from direct impact.

6. Roll across the space between the neck and shoulder and between the point of the hip and the spine. This helps to protect the shoulders and hips from direct impact.



For all Mounted
Combat
applications, it is
important that the
rider's structure
remain square to
the horse's
structure.



Riders are more stable front to back than side to side. Medieval saddle design adds to this stability. An unhorsing, whether created by your opponent or inadvertently by yourself, generally occurs to the side or off an oblique angle.



For Example a rider can shift from an upright seat to a half seat or two-point with no loss of stability fairly easily. Changing that many degrees to the left or right of center would be disastrous for most riders.

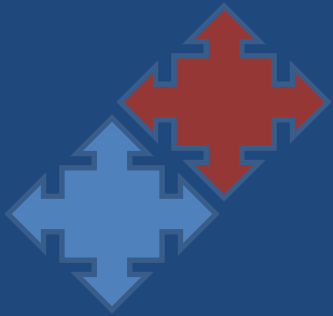
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Part II – Distance

11/17-18/12

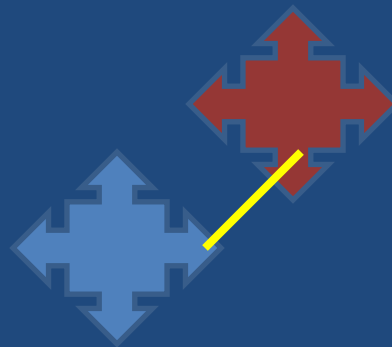
Remember when choosing distance, the goal is a direct hit. When we practice distances, we are more or less looking at the farthest optimal distance so as not to reach or hit with too oblique of an angle for an effective attack.

Wrestling (arm length)



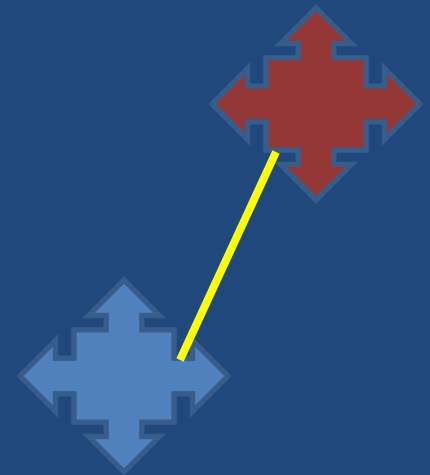
You want to be able to reach your opponent without losing your frame and compromising your stability.

Sword



Regardless of your weapon, you want to be reaching forward, not out at the point of impact.

Spear

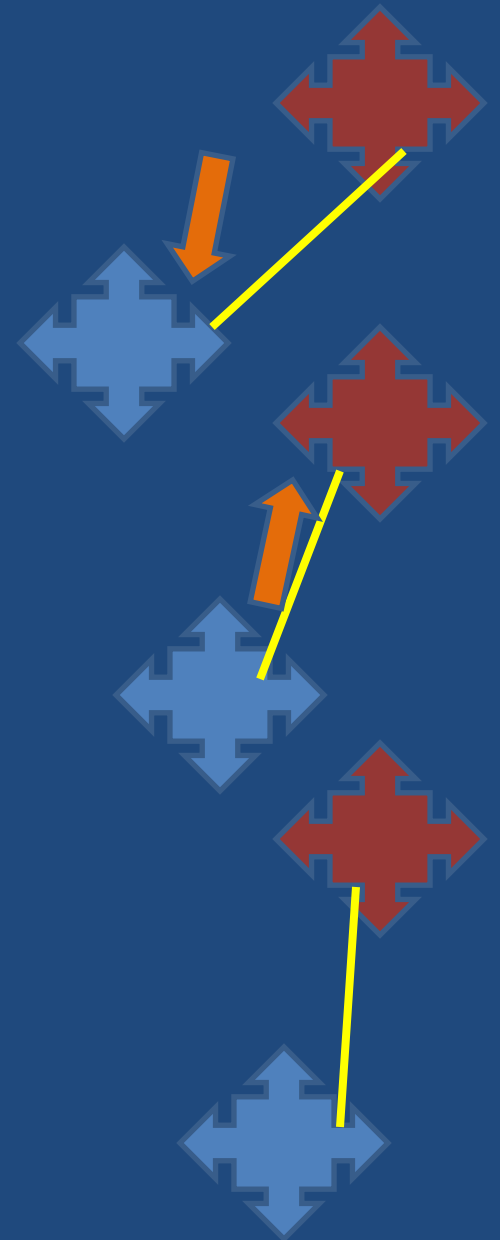


You want to use your strong center mass against your opponent's edges to insure your stability and their unhorsing.

Spear Distance and Force Optimization

An oblique hit with a lance is much more likely to cause a levering effect against the lance-wielder, and does not deliver the force gained through the horse's forward motion. A more direct approach is desirable. This is true also for wrestling and the sword. If you attack late and find yourself turned in the saddle (i.e. your structure is broken) you are most likely the one who will fall since your opponent's work is essentially already done

That said, you would not want to be knee to knee when doing a spear technique. You do not want to risk having horses collide because spear techniques are almost always done at a canter. Also you have almost no way to turn your own weapon to release pressure after a hit and risk unhorsing yourself.



Distance – Getting the horses comfortable working at the various distances is a crucial component for success. We have used riding in pairs, simple drill work, tag, “pato” and just hanging out to acclimate the horses. It is crucial that riders pay attention to the behavior of their own horses and the horses they are interacting with. Teaching horses to love these games is a group activity



Wrestling distance is knee to knee. For safety reasons it is good to have knee pads on at least one of each pair. Also riders should be prepared to drop stirrups if needed whenever they are working in close.



Practicing sword distance uses the hand slap game. The elbow should be bent at about a 90 degree angle.





Practicing spear distance uses the hand slap game with the elbow bent at about 110 degrees.

This pair (above) have clapped hands forward of their structures rather than directly out to the side. This anticipates any action to follow and helps prevent the structure-breaking torque of a more oblique angle.



When practicing hand slap games, focus on getting proper distance with good body position. If the distance between the horses is not correct, resist the urge to change position just to slap your partners hand. Use what you learn in your passé attempts to make the next one better.



Reaching to close distance and/or looking down creates a loss of structure with the rider's mass no longer square to the horse's. This position is a vulnerable one that opponents can use to their advantage. Also an inaccurate position makes subtle application of the aids extremely difficult, making it that much harder to get your "hoof work" correct.



When students are comfortable with riding past each other at the various distances, it is good to have them practice coming in with lateral work, such as this *attempt* at travers. Remember proper padding and the ability to free yourself from your stirrups as you start adding lateral work.

Properly preformed lateral work aids in unhorsing your opponent while remaining stable yourself. Good position also helps ensure clear communication with the horse.

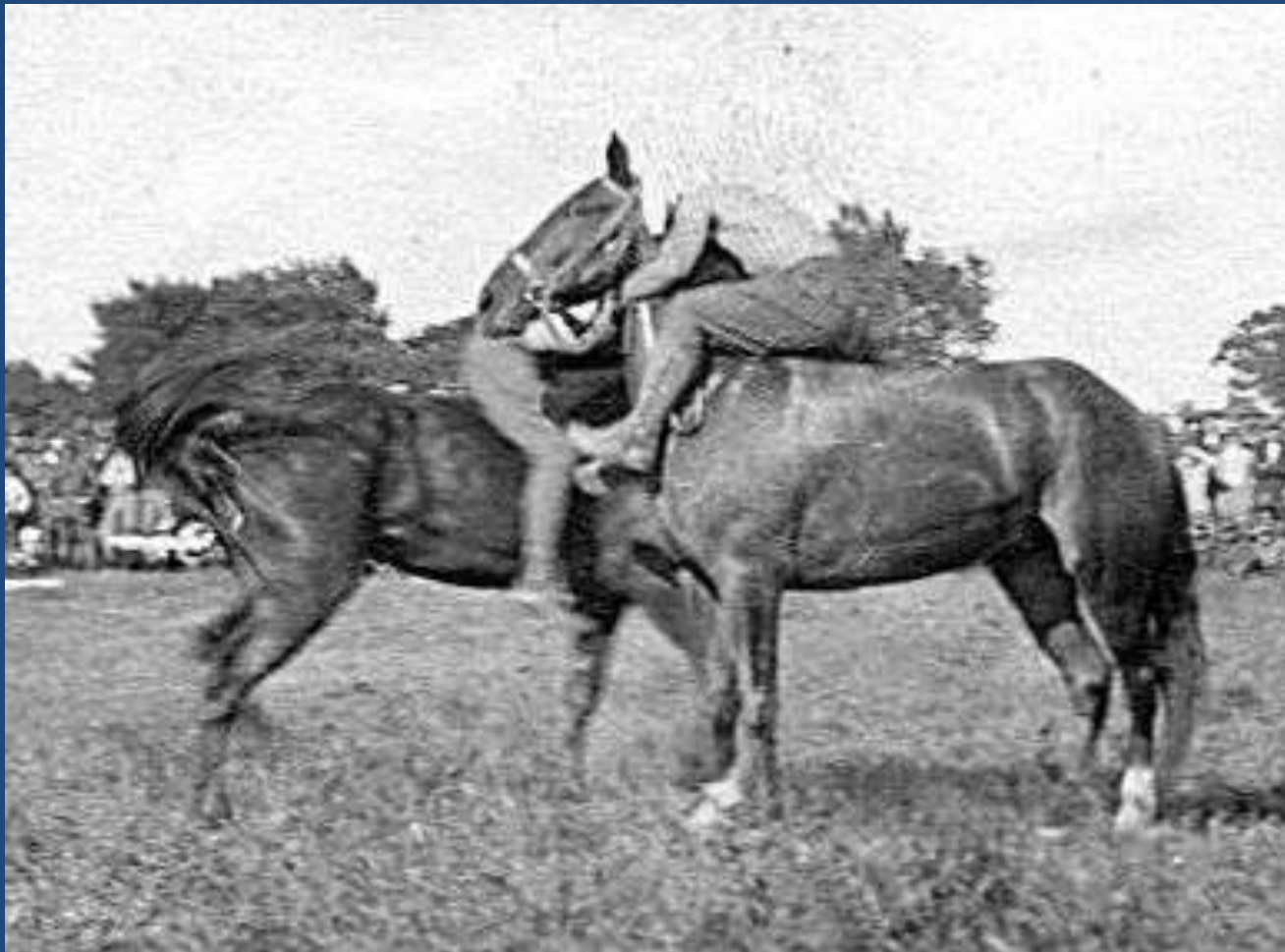


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Part III – Wrestling

11/17-18/12

Wrestling from horseback has a long history of military application. With proper training one can learn to execute wrestling maneuvers with more finesse than seen here, but it can remain a highlight of your mounted combat training.



“A highlight of training for 113th Cavalry troopers-horse mounted wrestling matches (c. 1921-1922)”

http://www.iowanationalguard.com/Museum/IA_History/images/horse_wrestle.jpg

Wrestling – Safety First

- These techniques are designed to work in a combat situation. Certain modifications need to be made so we do not hurt our friends.
- Many techniques are aimed at the head, neck, or helm. Instead we work from the shoulders or clothes.
- It is important that the horses are content in their work. If they begin to get upset, go back to the distance work, or at least the last stage where they were comfortable.
- As the riders get into the techniques, the horses sometimes feed off that energy. An occasional time out can help everyone stay calm while having fun.

Wrestling – Safety First

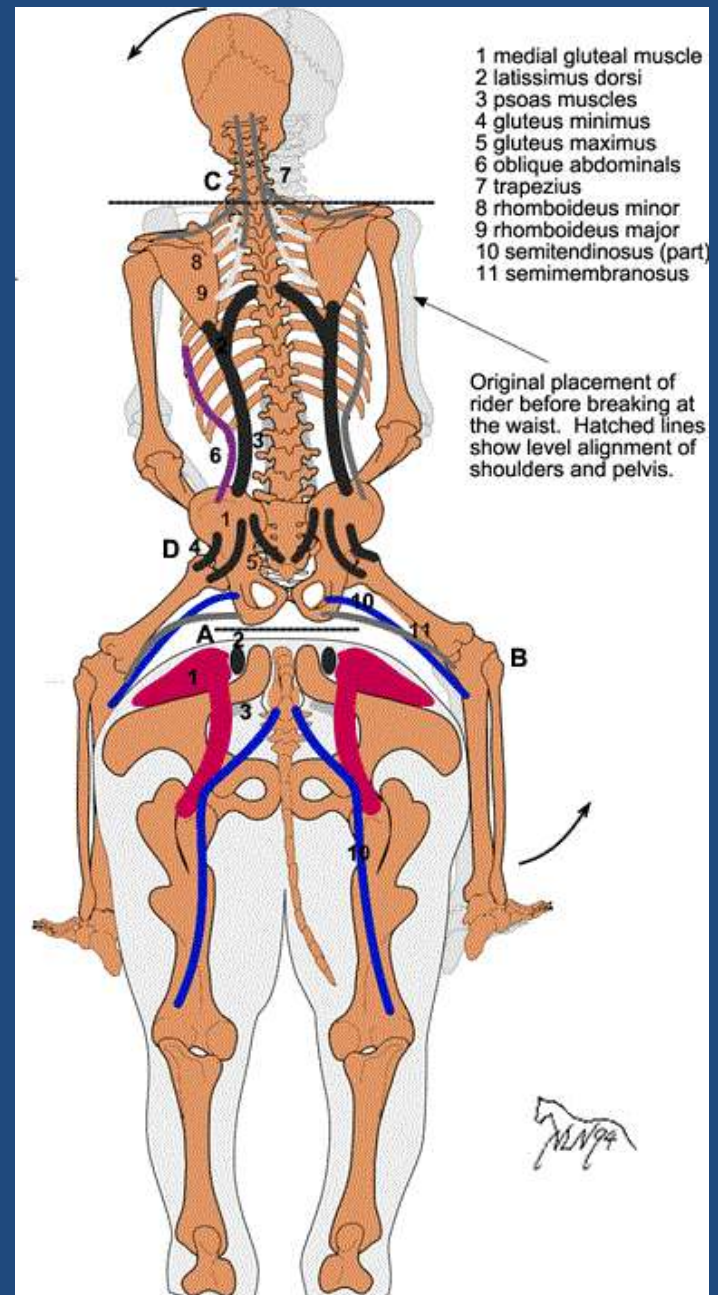
- Knee pads on at least one of the riders help to protect against bone on bone contact during close in work.
- It is best not to be in a closely confined saddle when practicing these technique. Ride bareback, with a vaulting surcingle, or in a relatively close contact saddle to lessen the risk of getting caught.
- If working in a saddle, the rider at risk of being removed from the saddle should drop their stirrups. Sometimes it helps if both riders ride without stirrups.
- Even if riders are not fully versed in falling, they should at least be comfortable with the basics of an emergency dismount.

Communicate with your partner! Different riders will have different level of comfort on how far they are willing to be removed from their center of balance.



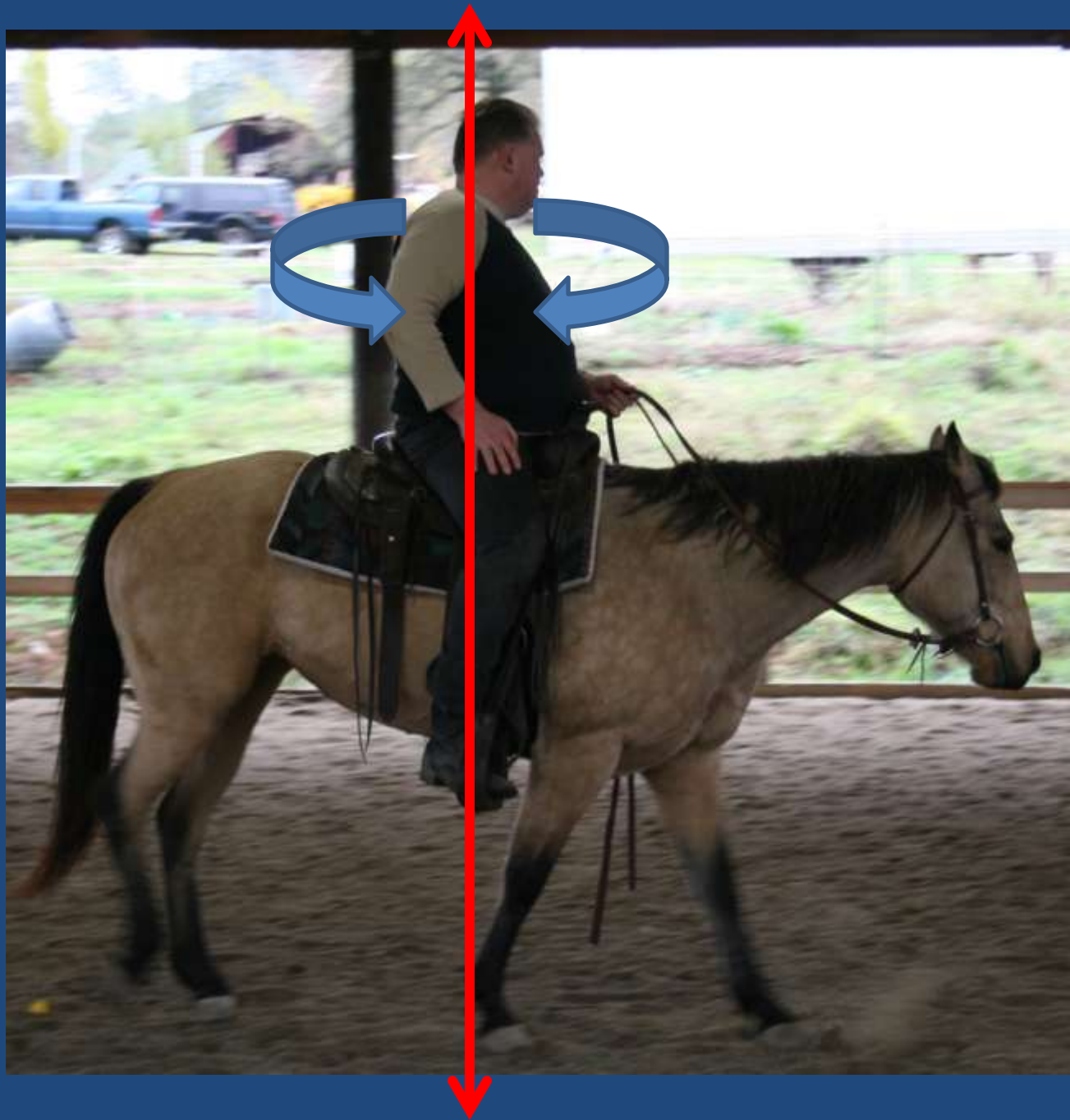
For wrestling, it is especially important that your structure remains square while you break your opponent's laterally or obliquely.

As soon as your center of gravity is beyond your support base, your frame is broken. When standing your feet form your base of support. When riding your pelvis forms your support base.



Rapid changes in the up and down or oblique planes create instability for which the pelvis can not compensate.

The greatest instability comes when we force our opponents to move in two planes at once or in succession.



We can use an up and down movement to break our opponents structure is by creating an wave-like motion. Versions of the canter gait naturally set up this wave-like motion. If there was a rider on the horse on the left, the orange arrows illustrate how the thrust of this two-beat lunge would be applied to the rider on the right: force would be applied from low to high, to displace the rider's center of balance.





We can also grasp or push lever points to break our opponent's structure. (Fiore) We can also use half-pass and leg yields to increase the lateral and oblique forces applied to our opponent.