



Circumventing Soreness

Circuit plates can help ease painful heels

Farrier Steve Stanley of Versailles, Ky., has shod some of racing's top trotters and pacers. Here he discusses using Circuit plates to relieve sore heels on a recent trotting superstar.

A few years back a friend was breaking a promising trotting filly. One day while I was shoeing her, he said to me, "You know when these babies get scared of something and take off running at a 2:00 clip? She does the same thing—only this filly stays on the trot doing it."

Clearly this was a filly to watch.

She trained down beautifully, won a qualifier and two stakes races. Then, in early September, she became lame in her right front foot. Worse, she was not responding to treatment. Soaking, poultice and hoof paints weren't helping.

After three long weeks, an abscess came out from deep in her heel. Any normal abscess would have come out sooner, and the way it came out of the back of the frog was a bit unusual. At this point, she was being hand-walked and getting fairly sound.

Now came the time to figure out how to shoe her and get her back to work. At the time, Circuit plates had not been around long, but the filly's

Why Circuit Plates Work

A horse at full extension lands heel first. Circuit plates spread the force of this impact over a larger area, thus diminishing the intensity. The one caveat to this is to assume you are getting equal contact with the Circuit plates on both the heels and the frog. Circuit plates work just like a bar shoe, but they spread the pressure over a greater area.

Circuit plates don't affect gait the same way a bar shoe does. The reason is that they don't have the same characteristics. They are far more equally weighted around the entire hoof while bar shoes are heel-weighted.

You apply Circuit plates to the bottom of a shoe as you would a pad, and thus they do not affect the ground surface of the shoe during the landing phase of the stride as a bar shoe does. Because of the way Circuit plates are applied, they can be put on almost any type of shoe that the horse wears, so generally no change in shoe type is necessary.



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A Circuit plate is a 1/8-inch aluminum plate that is pre-cut to form a bar shoe across the heels of a standard horseshoe. It goes onto the shoe like a pad and is attached by rivets. When applied to the shoe, it is under the

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Fitting a Circuit Plate

When applying a Circuit plate to the horseshoe, it is best to try to match the inside perimeter of both. This allows far less metal inside the boundary of your shoe.

To match the outside boundary of both leaves too much extra web inside the horseshoe, which can create sole pressure. Don't take this lightly—sole pressure will easily trump anything positive that is happening with the heels and send the horse's performance into a tailspin. Even with a nicely fitted Circuit plate, I find it necessary to grind a bevel onto the hoof side of the Circuit plate to prevent it from pressing on the sole.

entire shoe and will also form the bar across the heels of that shoe.

This was the first Standardbred I ever put them on. The abscess had run its course, but she still had some residual heel pain. The Circuit plates went on and the second trainer started some light jogging. She responded quite

nicely.

The head trainer told him to start some slow training miles and see if she was still sound. This also went well and by the Lexington Fall Trots, she was ready to qualify again.

She finished second in her first qualifier, and won the next one—in 1:58.3.

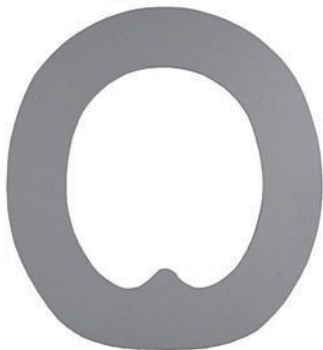
Her trainer, Bob Stewart, thought it was time for her to take on “the big girls.”

She was more than up to the task, winning the Breeders Crown, Goldsmith Maid and the division. The next year she won more than \$1 million, and repeated as divisional champ.

That filly's name was Cameron Hall 1:53.4s (\$1,816,236).

She did it all in the same type shoes. In fact, I kept both sets of her Breeders Crown shoes because they were so remarkably similar. Most horses, even champions, go through some sort of evolution in gait and shoeing during their career, but Cameron Hall found her groove early and kept it to the finish.

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