

Greetings!

You and your horse do not have a big problem – you have just forgotten something important.

I will show you a few video frames from the videos you sent – comments will be BELOW the photo. And may I suggest in the future, lay your phone on its side when you video. You will get a wide screen image and much better quality.



This is the first run, and you are approaching the pole that will go down. Everything is fine here.



Now things start to go bad. your horse is putting his right shoulder towards the pole. And you are not doing anything to help him.

Here's what you have forgotten: **You cannot move the shoulder out by pushing on his neck!** The more you push on his neck, the more the shoulder goes toward the pole.

How do you move that shoulder out?

You should be sitting in a slight position-right, your inside shoulder slightly back behind the outside one, asking your horse to assume that same position.

Bring the right inside rein back toward your pocket, and move the left outside rein out, off his neck, giving the shoulder a place to go. Keep the reins low on his neck.

Remember the triangle: horse's mouth, and your 2 hands.

The position you and your horse should be in as you pass each pole is a counter-flex position. I mean you present to him the same cues as you would if you were going to do a counter-flex and move him clear away from the pole.

Look at this brief video and see if it helps:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnWwy3i-a50>



See here what you are doing is not working. You are clearly in a position-left, trying to hold or move him out, but the reins are pushing his neck, and they are not affecting his shoulder in this position, so ... it keeps moving right, closer to the pole.



... and BANG! There goes the pole.



In this sequence from the 2nd video, you are just coming out of your first turn. Your job was to get his flexion changed to a right flexion, but you didn't get it done – he is still shaped left with his shoulder (again) toward the pole. Your hands are way up his neck. Remember “High hands rein the ears. **Low hands rein the shoulders.**” So you really need to get the shoulder control issue worked out. But there is a 2nd issue going on here.



You didn't make it to your key spot. Remember, the key spot is where your knee is just past the pole. Get there and then you can start back. But your horse is going to start back right where he has placed his front feet. So the challenge is compounded – he has his shoulder toward the pole AND he is crossing early.



See his shape? Consider that if he were shaped in flexion with his shoulder out to the left, even a little, you would have quite possibly made it past the pole even though you were short of your key spot.

Now let me show you something else that might help you.



Notice where the front feet are landing here. When we are riding, it is much easier for us to be aware of those front feet. We can try to put them in a specific place. And if you get your shoulder control working for you, then you will be able to do that effectively.



Now notice where the hind feet have landed. **The hind feet will land in the same place that the front feet were!** So if you place your horse's front feet close to the pole, you can know that his hind feet will be just as close. And if the front feet don't make it to the key spot, his hind feet won't make it either.

- 1) Practice the counter-flex with low hands.
- 2) When you do your slow work at a trot, make sure you always always always have your horse's shoulder out – never in.
- 3) Leave 4 or 5 feet of space between you and the pole when doing the slow work.
- 4) Don't let your horse start back until his front feet are clearly past the pole, because remember, at a gallop, that is where his hind feet will be.

Your horse will be fine – he is a good one. And you can do this – the changes I am suggesting are not that big of a deal.

Let me know if this helps, and if you have any questions, please ask. I want you to be successful.

Blessings,
Ken