

How Many Jumps Are In A Horse?

A Short Conversation With Oliver Brown

By Kathie Hamlin

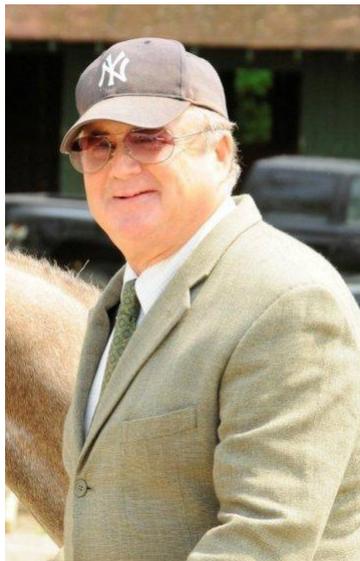


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Oliver Brown

I have a few “go-tos” for different types of equine expertise, but when it comes to basic training and good old-fashioned “horse sense,” I ask Oliver Brown.

While planning the summer issue of *Horse Times* with Emily, my cohort and editor, we decided that we wanted to include an article with Oliver. We chose to ask him if there is any truth to the saying “a horse only has so many jumps in its lifetime.” We expected to get some numbers and schedules of sorts on how to preserve and extend the number of jumps in a horse. It made sense that there was some protocol that has the answer, some sort of program to follow.

Well, we didn’t get the type of answer that we were expecting, but, we did get the point that Oliver wanted to convey. Talking with Oliver is always fun, always interesting, and if you are really listening...always educational.

So, I posed the question to Oliver, “Does a horse have a limited number of jumps in its lifetime?”

Oliver answered, “No, most horses are just schooled to death.”

Then he went on to explain, “My father told me and I often repeat “Don’t leave your best jump in the warm-up ring.” ***You should not turn your horse into a factory worker...bored of its job.*** You need to know when to quit.

More horses need to be happy. Take them on trail rides, jump small logs, ride them out in the fields, go cross-country. Trotting is great, trot up and down hills.

Jumping them over and over in the ring does not improve their jumping, it just dulls and sours them. Your horse needs to look bright in the show ring. You can’t accomplish this by drilling jumping, because after a while the excitement is gone.

Most of the time it is the rider who needs to practice and not the horse. If you think that your horse does not understand how to do something, it may be the way he is being asked. Listen to your horse and keep an open mind. Work on developing a better rapport with your horse. It’s like having a good dance partner, or a happy marriage.

You, the rider, shouldn’t be noticed when a horse is jumping. This is why the communication is so important. You need to be invisible.

Practice anything with your horse to develop a better relationship and he will become a better jumper. You need to be prudent and smart at managing your horse. And, don’t ask the horse to do something that you are not prepared to do.

Remember, jump heights are irrelevant to the horse...it’s only an issue to the rider. Talking to your horse is also unhelpful, but it does relax you.

No horse should be jumped more than twice a week, so if you as a rider need more practice, find another horse.”

Oliver’s advice is always very simple, but hard to implement. I think that we often needlessly complicate things and therefore make it difficult for our horses. That’s what I take away.