

Pony Club Conference Epsom

Good morning everyone. This is my fourth year as Chairman of Training for The Pony Club. Like everyone the older you get the more time flies - you seem to have and want to do more and have less time to do it. I feel that The Pony Club especially after the strategic review last year is going through an exciting time. We have to evolve and work together with the major disciplines such as British dressage, British SJ and British Eventing to offer the best experience and opportunities for our members.

In 2013 The Pony Club had 19 areas and 344 branches with a membership of 29,423 and 563 centres with a UK membership of 13,411. As a training organisation I feel we must offer training to all members, from the E test lead rein riders* through to the competition rider working towards the Olympic disciplines, from a new 22 year old member on a new horse, to the Member who wants to become a professional groom.* Over eighty five years The Pony Club has developed a tried and tested platform of Tests which follow a very logical staircase of progression from E test to A test. This has only been possible thanks to the dedicated coaches DCs and volunteers at branch level upwards. Branch and centre coaches and instructors, who have vast experiences through their equine life whether from hunting or competing, deliver a brilliant standard of coaching to all Members. Don't forget that The Pony Club also has an expanding visiting coach database of Pony Club Specialists and discipline specific coaches who can work alongside your coaches whenever you need some extra support or something a little different.

When I started Instructing within The Pony Club I had the top ride. I was only 20 then and there were very few Instructors. There are now three generations of coaches below me. We do not want to lose these very valuable experienced coaches, but The Pony Club must encourage the training and mentoring of our young coaches. One of the biggest issues that I hear from young coaches is that they find that Branches are unwilling to allow them to gain coaching experience. It takes a very special type of coach to be able to instruct a group of eight C test riders of varying ages on all sorts of sizes, ages and types of ponies in a large field with four other rides going on at the same time. This skill nearly always starts from years of fun and learning as a member of a branch or centre. Basic knowledge and background of The Pony Club rallies and camps I feel is essential as a foundation for our future coaches. These Instructors that know how much fun they had in Pony Club often have more to give to their branches than a discipline specific coach. It is always exciting to see the pleasure that young members get during riding and stable management sessions with young Instructors from their branch.

Over the last few years the Training Committee has developed a progressive staircase to help encourage and motivate our older members to become coaches within their Branches and Centres. I would like firstly today to just explain what is available from within The Pony Club for our members who wish to give back the fun and knowledge they gained from their Branch or Centre.

The Introduction to Pony Club Coaching Course

This is a standard one day course and is in line with both the early stages of rider development and the most modern approaches to coach development. Although we would not expect this coach to take sole charge of a ride at a Pony Club rally, they can then assist with Pony Club coaching in Branches and Centres under supervision and with a mentor.

However during this course they learn about risk assessments, accident forms, lesson plans and how to think and plan ahead for a future rally. They also have the chance to deliver a short pony care session and coach a small ride with very constructive feedback from the coaches taking the course. This course gives members who want to start helping at rallies and camps the confidence to start coaching. They would not be expected to take sole charge of a ride but can assist and gain experience watching and helping.

The Coaching Development for All Course.

This course is for young coaches (minimum age 17 years) who have completed The Introduction to Pony Club Coaching Course within the previous 2 years. Holding the C+ Test is also recommended. They should also possess a coaching log book signed by a Mentor Coach to show that they have been actively coaching / assisting with coaching in a Branch / Centre since they attended the Introduction to Coaching Course.

Any other Pony Club instructors at any age or level, who wish to develop or refresh their coaching skills, are also very welcome to attend.

The aim of this day is to support the coaches with any problems they may have come across since their Introduction course and to help and mentor them during two coaching sessions using C test riders. The first session focuses on developing the balance of the horse and rider on the flat and over a fence and the second session looks at developing the balance of the rider and security of the lower leg and builds up to riding the canter, in a rhythm, in cross country seat. This day is very beneficial for our young coaches starting to take on the responsibilities of a ride. It not only focuses on the control and safety of the ride in the open especially in the introduction of XC, but also builds on their confidence and enables their coaching technique to improve.

Senior Coach Development day.

There is now a need for the training committee to develop a coaching day that will be very beneficial for our more experienced coaches used in The Pony Club. These coaches may never need or want to take exams or gain formal qualifications. The Pony Club branches have coaches with a vast amount of knowledge and experience who are the backbone of many a rally and camp at all levels and their experience must never be lost. These days would share their experiences but as well as focusing on health and safety would build on the modern coaching techniques needed today to give motivation and knowledge to our members.

The Pony Club Coaching Certificate*

This certificate is for Pony Club members who have passed the B Test and have attended a Coaching Certificate Training Day. If a candidate cannot attend a training day they must be informally assessed by either a Training Committee member or a Coaching Certificate assessor.

It is recommended that Candidates should have attended the [Introduction to Pony Club Coaching](#) and Coaching Development for all Courses and have undergone a disclosure check, and have attended First Aid and Safeguarding courses.

Coaching Certificate candidates should be experienced and would have been coaching in Pony Club for a few years. They are very capable of organizing and planning a ride at C test level. They are assessed whilst taking an hour's lesson in a field on the flat and over fences and are assessed giving a lead rein lesson to a group of riders and have to present a care

session up to C+. This is a very worthwhile test to achieve and shows an experienced coach who can take on the responsibility of a ride, who understands the importance of safety yet can give fun and constructive instruction. These coaches are an asset to any branch or Centre for camp and rallies.* Coaching certificate training days are run throughout the year. This gives our young coaches a chance to be helped towards the coaching certificate tests later on in the year but also gives them a chance to brush up their skills before the rush of rallies and camps.

Although these courses do not offer any recognized formal qualification, any Pony Club member who has attended these courses and gained their Coaching Certificate will have come up through The Pony Club and have gained experience teaching at Pony Club rallies. They are of real benefit to members and to DCs/Proprietors and to the future of The Pony Club. These courses work hand in hand and give experience for those candidates who wish to take The UK Coaching Certificate. Unlike the UKCC level 1+2 The Pony Club coaching certificate requires the candidate to hold the B test which makes The Pony Club coaching pathway more exclusive.

The UKCC qualifications are generic through all sports whether hockey, table tennis or equine. They provide a recognized stamp of quality coaching across all sport and across the UK. **

It has helped to raise the profile of equestrian coaching by establishing best practice coaching standards. We now have a nationally recognized framework of qualifications for coach education developed by the UK's most successful sports.

The introduction of UKCC has shifted the culture of coaching in the horse world. A balance has been created between the traditional equestrian 'what to coach' skills (mainly focusing on the technical aspects of equestrianism) with greater emphasis on 'how to coach' skills (for example better two way communication, an understanding of different coaching and learning styles, continually reviewing,

The Pony Club currently offers UKCC equestrian qualifications at Levels 1 and 2 and more recently, level 3

[LEVELS FOR THE UKCC \(EQUESTRIAN\)*](#)

Level 1 The role of the Level 1 coach is to assist more qualified coaches, delivering aspects of coaching sessions, normally under direct supervision.

Level 2 The role of the Level 2 coach is to prepare for, deliver and review coaching sessions. The technical equestrian knowledge required is around B Test level, and this coach will be able to plan a short series of linked lessons, e.g. for Camp or similar.

Level 3 The role of the Level 3 coach is to plan, implement, analyze and revise annual coaching programs. This coach has a technical knowledge at around A Test level.

This coach could also "mentor" Level 2 coaches who need support.

It is very exciting and I think going to be extremely rewarding to have our own Home Grown level 3 coaches coming through-these coaches have grown up and probably been in The Pony Club as a member and then as a coach most of their life.

The way forward.

It is very important that all Pony Club coaches continue to develop their skills. Every primary school teacher to University lecturer, dentist surgery to primary care trust now has to be continually mentored and assessed to meet expectations.

We hope to develop a series of regional senior mentoring days for experienced coaches to become established mentors who would then be available to be used through the areas and branches. DCs would then have the option of inviting a Pony Club mentor into their branch to give constructive advice to their coaches. This would involve lesson planning to health and safety and risk assessments looking at their coaching log books and watching and helping the individual coaches.*I feel that this must be a real positive way forward to helping our young coaches whilst they are actually coaching and instructing at a rally or camp. Area 9 is already well on the way to organising these days and I am keen to see the response from their branches and coaches.

All coaches used in The Pony Club should be encouraged to use the new Coaching Experience log books. These are a real benefit both for the coach and the Pony Club mentors* taking coaching courses. Each coaching session has really positive good points and areas to record feedback from the riders and their mentor and not where they could have improved their coaching or preparation. It is very important our coaches start to recognize their strengths and how they can improve any weaknesses of a session. We all are inclined to turn up, coach and leave with little feedback from our riders or feedback to the parents - how many of us properly reflect on our session? -we just rush on to the next lesson!

Test Assessing

It is important that we help train our young coaches to start examining and assessing the Pony Club Tests. Although some branches are very active, little encouragement or training often has been given to young coaches who would like to start assessing the lower level tests. The training committee is working with the Centre Membership Committee and Centre co-ordinators to introduce training days for Branch and centre coaches who would like to start assessing tests up to C test. These days will help develop the skills needed to make any Test day a positive experience for our younger Pony Club members. *These days will all follow the same format. Not only will they look at the standard required but they will help the new assessors improve their questioning abilities and feedback to the test candidates. We must draw out the best in the test candidates by sympathetic questioning and helpful feedback and I hope leave them with a positive experience.

The Pony Club tests are being re-formatted to allow a much better understanding for members, coaches parents and assessors. The standard and syllabus have not been altered. So far we are working down from A test to B test. Each section of the test has been broken down into much more readily explained criteria.** Feedback sheets are also being introduced for the candidates where comments can be written against the criteria to give a much more detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of a candidate against the syllabus. I hope this will make both the understanding of the requirements of the tests much easier to follow and train for but will also focus candidates on their strengths and weaknesses in their training. To coincide with this the Training Committee are looking at producing films of mock B tests. This will enable assessors to discuss the featured riders against the criteria of the B test and be able to discuss and debate the standard of the riders. This will be I hope very beneficial in keeping the standard of the B test level throughout the areas as well as ensuring our assessors.

CPD DAYS

It is very important that our members and coaches have the opportunity watch and train with top coaches. Coaching conferences give new ideas on training and refresh old forgotten ones. They are also very important as a means of networking and communicating with old friends. However they often do little to improve the individual standard of

coaching. It is very important if we are to maintain the Pony Club membership in branches and centres that we offer the best training for all members. We need to encourage and motivate all our coaches and the training committee wish to offer a system of much smaller and more interactive CPD days where coaches can be encouraged and helped. These could then be done in the evenings so coaches do not have to take days off and save on the ever increasing fuel costs.

I do realise these smaller days are going to have implications at branch and Area level both in finance, organisation and Demo riders.

The work load for DCs and Area reps is already at bursting point. The priority must be to offer the best training fun and education to our members and this will only be possible if we develop our young coaches coming up. The Pony Club Intro and Coaching Development training days, with the Pony Club Coaching Certificate combined with UKCC qualifications, smaller CPD interactive days, Assessor test standard setting days and training days for young examiners gives The Pony Club a very positive framework to take our Pony Club forward. We now need to look at the best way forward in delivering these courses through the areas and branches.

Last year the training committee had feedback from DCs and coaches that they would like the instructors conference to be based on coaching at a typical Pony Club rally. The title for the conferences this year is REFRESHING RALLIES . **Thursday 10th April** - The College EC, Keysoe, Bedfordshire

Wednesday 16th April - Blackdyke Farm Riding & Competition Centre, Carlisle, Cumbria.

The conference is looking at taking a C test ride making it fun and yet instructional, introducing the skills needed for Tetrathlon, Pony Racing and Polocrosse and how these relate to the general skills required for achieving The Pony Club Tests.

RIDER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

I am very excited about the Pony Clubs Rider development pathway .This is a great opportunity for our young riders who are not already receiving support through the BEF World Class or Excel programmes, or be on any existing Pony, Junior or Young Rider squads.They will have a full days training from experienced coaches and will have the opportunity to really develop their skills which will be a real bonus in their Pony Club competitions during the year. On top of this they have the chance of being selected to attend two days of training at Sommerford Park in June. This is such a great opportunity for members to have the chance of an alternative pathway into the support programmes offered by Sport England, other parts of UK Sport, and the governing bodies of the three Olympic disciplines. The Pony Club has organised nine regional assessment and training days, held in April, open to all Pony Club Members aged 12 – 18 years

Building on from this, the Training committee with the eventing Show Jumping and Dressage committees would like to develop this further and are looking into introducing regional Rider development training days next year leading up to the assessment days.

This Pathway will be of such a benefit to our members and I am very enthusiastic about the training opportunities it will introduce to our areas.