

Keeping Hunter-Jumper Show Horses Ready to Compete



ADDING SUPPORT. Carl Hayden checks the fit on a bar insert, above, right, before welding it to an egg bar shoe as apprentice Sean Matousek looks on. Hayden uses bar shoes extensively in his practice, which consists primarily of hunter-jumpers.

New Hampshire farrier finds keeping these high-end horses healthy takes care and patience

By Pat Tearney, Managing Editor

FARRIER CARL HAYDEN lives a few hundred yards down a winding road from the picture-postcard New Hampshire village of Kensington, just a stone's throw from the Massachusetts's border. When I arrive at his home on a recent spring morning, he's doing what a lot of farriers do in those precious few morning minutes before embarking on a hard day's work.

He's shoeing a horse — his own big blonde Belgian draft horse named Major.

8 a.m. Major has already been led into stocks by the time I arrive



UPS-A-DAISY. (Above) If a draft horse doesn't feel like putting his foot up for the stocks, it takes a little extra effort, as Carl Hayden's facial expression clearly says. Note the heel calks on the foot at left.

FARRIER'S HOLIDAY. (Left) Carl Hayden checks the shoe fit on Nicholas, one-half of his team of pulling horses. Hayden trains his team during his off hours and, on this day, shod one horse before and the other after work.

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EASING PRESSURE. Carl Hayden shod this hunter-jumper with wedge pads, but used a hacksaw to remove part of the pad at the heel. The resulting gap relieves pressure on the frog as well as making it easier for the hoof to expand normally.

and Hayden and his apprentice, Sean Matousek, have prepped the horse's front feet and Hayden is nailing a shoe in place. He tells me he's preparing this horse and its partner for the coming season of pulling competitions.

"This is something I'm getting back into," Hayden says. "I used to have a team that I competed with, but I've been out of it a few years. I bought this team just a little while ago."

8:11 a.m. Major doesn't seem to mind the stocks, nor having his feet tied up while they're worked on. The shoes Hayden is nailing into place have a broad toe calk, as well as lengthy heel calks. Hayden says the draft horses have been barefoot for 18 months. He's putting the shoes on now to give the horses a couple of days to get used to them before he starts practicing.

"Their legs have to get hard," he explains. "You could start them barefoot, but the sled they pull weighs 1,000 pounds."

8:21 a.m. Hayden and Matousek work together to get Major's foot secured in the stocks. Once that's done, Matousek cleans up the foot. Hayden does the trimming, using a hoof knife as

well as nippers. He also checks the shoe fit and nails it on. Once he's satisfied with the way the shoe looks, Matousek steps in with the rasp and finishes the hoof.

8:47 a.m. The pair repeat the process on all four of Major's hooves. Once they've finished the final hoof, they ease the big horse's last hoof free of the stock straps, unhook the chains and back him out of the stall. As Major is led back to his stall, the big calks on his shoes churn up the damp soil, sending chunks of New Hampshire earth flying into the air.

8:53 a.m. "We'll shoe the big horse tonight," he says. "This is the small horse."

Small horse is a relative term in this case. Hayden tells me that Major weighs more than 2,300 pounds.

8:57 a.m. Once Major's safely in his stall, Hayden loads a few final tools into his shoeing trailer and we're ready to roll. We head down the road to a nearby convenience store to pick up a quick cup of coffee before we head to his first barn.

9:03 a.m. Hayden, who has been involved in horseshoeing for more than 30 years, tells me his practice has

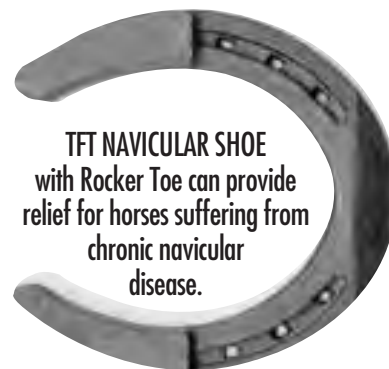
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changed drastically in recent years. He specializes in shoeing high-end show horses in the area, particularly hunter-jumpers. For many years he was a farrier on the go, often spending days and weeks away from home, as he followed his clients to horse shows and events all over the United States as well as overseas.

9:11 a.m. "When my little girl came

along, it was time to change," he says. He and his wife, Wendy, have a daughter, Hannah Mae. Hayden now does the vast majority of his shoeing nearby, so he can be home with his family every night.

"I do six barns right around here now," he says. "And I usually work four or five days a week. Most days we go to one barn, set up and shoe there all day. Some days we'll split our time between two

barns."

The barn we're headed for is no more than 20 minutes from his home. His longest drive is a little more than an hour, but it's to one of the barns where he can spend an entire shoeing day at one stop.

Hayden's gone from being a farrier who routinely jumped aboard airplanes to accompany his clients to becoming one who limits his travel time. He avoids the common farrier practice of making three or four shoeing stops a day.

"No one pays you to pack up your rig and move," he says, as we near the barn.

9:17 a.m. We pull into the barn driveway and Hayden carefully maneuvers his rig up to a sliding barn door. He's checked the wind as we pulled into the driveway and has chosen to work from an area where the barn will be windward of his rig. The barn sits atop a hill, and while it's a bright, early May morning, a raw wind cuts across the hill. Stepping from behind shelter for even a moment makes the day seem a lot colder than it is.

"A lot of guys will throw wedge pads on the hinds and lock all the joints..."

"It's always windy here," Hayden says. "During July, that can be nice. This is my biggest and oldest account," Hayden says. "I've been shoeing here 18 years."

9:21 a.m. Hayden and Matousek quickly set up the trailer for work. This is their second straight day at this barn, where Hayden is preparing several hunter-jumpers for the upcoming Saratoga Horse Show in New York. He says he could have unhooked his trailer and left it here overnight, but he wanted his rig and tools handy for working on his own horses.

The rig is a converted horse trailer, featuring a swing-down tailgate and a side door. Shoes are racked along the back wall and drill presses, belt sanders, an anvil stand and other implements are all neatly arranged so there's plenty of room for Hayden to work inside, out of the elements. The rig also includes a

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LABOR SAVER. Carl Hayden uses a grinder on a shoe while apprentice Sean Matousek drills holes in wedge pads. Hayden's shoeing trailer is well equipped with power tools, its own generator and enough room for two shoers to work inside comfortably at the same time.

a back-support belt, then his shoeing apron. "I need to get loosened up before I tackle the tougher ones."

Matousek actually starts the horse, cutting the clinches and pulling the shoes as Hayden watches and offers guidance as needed. Matousek, who recently completed the farrier program at Cornell University, has been working with Hayden about 2 months.

9:32 a.m. Hayden looks over the shoes that have been removed.

"You'll notice these are bar shoes," he says. "We use a lot of them on hunter-jumpers. A bar shoe offers a degree of support without wedging the leg when it's loading and pushing off."

Hayden usually welds his own bar

Honda electric generator.

"Particularly when I was doing horse shows, I'd find that you couldn't count on the power at a lot of places," he explains.

Hayden ordered the rig, then worked with Brent Chidsey at Stone Well Bodies & Equipment to design the interior.

"When I started out, I was in my teens and I rode with a guy whose shoeing rig was an old C-4 Jeep," he says. "He had his propane tanks set up on the back and I'd ride right on top of them. I'm sure OSHA would love to see that today."

9:21 a.m. The vast majority of the horses Hayden shoes are hunter-jumpers.

"I do one dressage horse and maybe four event horses that I started shoeing as a favor to a vet," Hayden says. "The vet died and I'm still shoeing them."

9:25 a.m. While the rig is being set up, a groom at the barn has brought the first horse into an aisle and put her in cross ties. Hayden explains that the mare, named Bianca, is primarily used for lessons. He'll just be shoeing her hinds.

"I like to start the day with an easy horse," he says, as he straps on

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POURING SUPPORT. Carl Hayden injects Equithane Equi-Pak into a shoe using Equithane mesh to hold the liquid in place while it sets up. Hayden finds the Equi-Pak helps spread concussive forces across the hoof.

especially behind, you move every joint. With the bar, it adds 2 degrees of support where the horse works, but it doesn't change the angle of the limb at all."

9:37 a.m. After Matousek has cleaned up the hooves, Hayden picks up the hinds and begins to trim the hooves.

"I measure each foot at least twice," he says, as he uses a hoof gauge. "'Eyeballing' is guessing. I want to know that the breakover is in the same place that I think it is."

Hayden admits there are a lot of farriers who seem to be able to get the job done by eyeballing hooves, but says he wants nothing to do with it.

"I grew up measuring," he says. "I just can't see why you'd want to take a chance."

9:43 a.m. Hayden says there is

inserts into the shoes. He says bar shoes have made a big difference in his use of pads.

"Out of 100 horses, I might have

wedge pads on four," he says. "I used to have them on a lot more, but I've learned to get around that. If you put a 1- or 2-degree wedge pad on a shoe,

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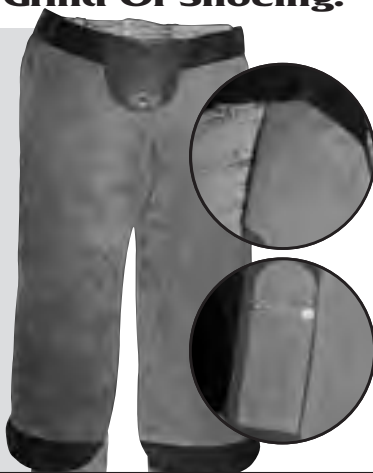
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TAKING AWAY LEVER. Carl Hayden nails a hind shoe in place. Hayden sees shoeing hunter-jumpers as a matter of "support and relief," providing added support for the heels of the hoof and providing relief for the toe by moving the breakover back.

a down side to working with hunter-jumpers.

"You could start wondering how good a shoer you are," he says, "because half of the horses you shoe are lame, especially behind."

"When hunters come up, they jump 3-6 (3-foot-6-inches) and they don't go up over that height until they become a working hunter. And almost all working hunters are cripples. You see bar shoes everywhere. Eight out of 10 will have some pretty serious stuff on the bottom of their feet."

9:51 a.m. The next horse is Maxwell, a high-amateur horse with a lot of talent, according to Hayden. He'll be getting new shoes all around, as well as having his hooves filled with Equithane Equi-Pak.

9:57 a.m. Once Matousek has removed the shoes, Hayden begins trimming. He pays close attention to the heels and again repeatedly measures the angles as he works.

10:11 a.m. "Shoeing is really preventative maintenance," Hayden says. "You want to take care of things before you get to the point where you need a vet."

10:32 a.m. Hayden attaches Equithane mesh to each of Maxwell's shoes as he prepares them. The mesh will hold the Equi-Pak in place without taking up as much room as a pad. Maxwell is prone to getting hoof separations when he jumps, says Hayden, and the Equi-Pak will help take the pressure



THE NOT-SO-EXPENSIVE STUFF. While hunter-jumpers are frequently shod with various kinds of pads and sole protection, Hayden says it's not always necessary to use expensive material. Here he pads the sole of a horse using foam cut from a mattress pad.

off the hoof walls.

Hayden nails the shoes in place. When he's done, Matousek wraps each hoof with duct tape from heel to heel, before the Equi-Pak is injected into the hoof. Matousek holds up the feet as the substance sets up, which takes about a minute.

10:37 a.m. Hayden says an important aspect of shoeing jumpers is what he calls "support and relief."

"The back of the foot needs to be supported and the front needs to be relieved," he says. "That means you quicken the breakover. When the horse lands over a big fence, his leg is extended way out in front of him, so you want some of that lever taken away."

10:46 a.m. Show hunters and jumpers take a lot of attention from a farrier, Hayden says.

"You have an ethical obligation to your client to keep the horses in a condition where they can compete," he says.

10:52 a.m. After Maxwell is finished, George is brought out. Hayden talks with his owner and suggests putting some foam padding on the front feet. When she agrees, he cuts the foam from mattress padding. George is an older horse, who gets a bit stiff. But he's also a successful one.

Despite being 22 years old, George was named Horse Of The Year by the American Horse Show Association (since renamed USA Equestrian) last year. His owner says he seems to be

Red Tang

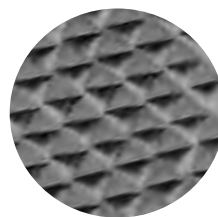


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NO ROOM FOR HORSES. Carl Hayden's shoeing rig is a converted horse trailer. The insides were designed by Brent Chidsey and completed at Stone Well Bodies & Equipment in Genoa, N.Y.

cramping up in a hind leg lately. Hayden tells her he'll check the feet and may increase the shoe size by a half.

10:57 a.m. George has relatively flat feet, Hayden says as Matousek begins to pull the horse's shoes.

"He's a horse that's sensitive to the degree of hardness that he jumps on," Hayden says. "The foam will help

relieve that, but he doesn't need the real expensive stuff."

11:02 a.m. As Hayden trims George's front feet, Matousek gets out the right-size shoe and safes it using a grinder in the truck. It's a technique that keeps Matousek busy, teaches him many aspects of shoeing and also helps speed Hayden's shoeing day.

11:13 a.m. When Hayden measures George's feet, there hasn't been as much growth as he had thought. Rather than shoe the horse with a size-larger shoes, he decides to modify the current size to a half-size larger.

11:23 a.m. Hayden heats the shoes and widens them at the anvil in his truck. He hot fits the shoes, carefully checks the fit and returns to the anvil for a few final minor adjustments before nailing them in place.

11:36 a.m. It's important to keep a number of factors in mind when shoeing hunter-jumpers, Hayden says as he works. One of those is the role of the front and hind limbs.

"You have to understand the importance of the forelegs in jumping," he says. "First the horse has to elevate with the front legs, then they become the landing gear. So there is a lot of force on the fronts, even though the hinds are the driving force."

11:47 a.m. Hayden points out that he



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has left the shoe a little long. He says that's because he has to provide support for the horse not just now, but for weeks down the road, when the horse is still competing.

"You get into the fourth week, when the foot starts to really grow and push out. If you have a short shoe, you won't have enough length," he says. "If you shoe a little extra long, then she has something he can grow into."

Hayden says hunter-jumpers are typically shod more frequently than horses in some other disciplines, especially during the show season.

"A lot of the really elite shoe jumpers are shod every 28 days," he says. "You want them as right as possible. I've shod one horse every 19 days. It won, so I guess it worked. But it's an expensive option for the owner."

11:53 a.m. George will be getting wedge pads on his hind feet for added support.

"You have to be careful with wedge pads," he says. "A lot of guys will throw wedge pads on the hinds and they'll lock all the joints. You can lock-up the stifle

"You have to make the horse comfortable and that means you're going to be uncomfortable..."

and the horse will go from a huge stride to a small stride. Too big a wedge pad can also pinch the horse's back."

While Hayden trims the hinds, Matousek drills holes in the pads. He also drills and taps stud holes in the heels of the shoes, since hunter-jumpers will wear some form of studs in most events.

12:03 p.m. After he attaches the pads to the shoes, Hayden has Matousek use a hacksaw to remove a small piece of the pad at the heel of the shoe. The resulting gap keeps pressure off the heels and allows hoof expansion as the horse moves.

12:23 p.m. George doesn't seem to mind the shoeing process. Hayden says it's important to keep the hooves as low as possible when working with an older horse. He also massages an area high on the horse's withers before he starts

working on one of the hinds. You can almost hear the horse sigh with pleasure at the attention.

"I've learned a lot about muscles over the years," says Hayden. "Sometimes you can make the horse a lot more comfortable by spending 30 seconds like this. A lot of jumpers get a muscle knotted up in this area. You can tell just by the way their foot goes on the stand

to cut the clinches."

12:45 p.m. Once George is back in his stall, we take a quick lunch break. We drive to a sandwich shop in a nearby village. Over lunch, Hayden says he has spent most of his life around horses and was working with the animals at camps when he was only 14. He went to the Michigan School Of Horseshoeing, run by Red Tomlinson, during the 1970s.

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If he sees anything missing in young farriers, it is horsemanship.

"These young kids come out and want to be shoers, but they have to realize the horse is the big thing in this equation," he says.

Hayden says part of horsemanship — particularly when working with hunter-jumpers — is not only taking into consideration the individual horse, but what that horse will be asked to do at a given time.

"I've walked dozens of courses with riders, talking to them about what the horse goes through," he says.

Hayden encourages Matousek as well as other young farriers he meets to spend as much time around horses as possible.

"You have to be comfortable around horses for them to be comfortable around you," he says.

We also discuss Hayden's billing practices. In many cases, Hayden says he can bill the barn. Today, for instance, many of the horses he's seeing are actu-

ally owned by the barn owners. For some horses that are boarded at the barn, the owner adds the shoeing bill on to the boarding charges. That's not as common as it used to be, however.

"It's gotten to be too expensive," he says. "You need to be talking with the owner when you're talking about this much money."

1:17 p.m. When we get back to the barn, Hayden sends Matousek over to a nearby barn to leave a message that

"Shoeing is really preventative maintenance..."

he'll be ready to shoe a horse named Joe Kennedy in about 90 minutes. Since the barn is only a short distance away, the horse will be walked over to where Hayden is set up, saving him the time of packing up, then setting up again closer to where Joe Kennedy is stalled.

1:23 p.m. While Matousek is gone,

Hayden puts a new edge on his hoof knife using the belt sander. He's a big believer in using power tools such as a grinder, sanders and drill presses to make his work go as smoothly as possible. He hot shapes the shoes, but uses power tools to safe the edges and bevel shoes when needed. He also does his welding with a torch rather than using the forge and anvil.

1:29 p.m. While Hayden is preparing to work on his next horse, he's approached by a young woman who tells him her horse has thrown a shoe. Although Hayden is not her regular farrier, he promises to take a look at the horse before he leaves.

1:33 p.m. The next horse is Nolan, another expensive show jumper, who requires a little special handling.

"He doesn't mind you handling his feet, he'll keep his foot on a hoof stand for you, you can hot fit him," says Hayden. "But he will not stand still if he hears power tools being used. He just doesn't like the noise."

When Matousek returns from his errand, Hayden explains the procedure

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DEEP TRACTION. Carl Hayden looks over the calk-studded bottom on a shoe that he's just nailed on to the hoof of one of his draft horses.

that the two will use.

1:37 p.m. "Instead of doing the fronts, then the hinds, we'll prep all four feet at once," he says. "Then we'll put Nolan in an empty stall and let him relax while we drill, shape and tap the shoes. Once we're done and know he's calmed down, we'll bring him back out, check the fit and nail him up."

1:42 p.m. Nolan is owned by a couple who live in Colorado. Hayden says that the time he has invested in learning to shoe show horses and keeping them able to perform has paid off well for him.

"If you want to do expensive shoeing, you have to shoe expensive horses," he says.

One thing that means is continually

working on getting better, according to Hayden. He has been active in the Southern New England Farrier's Association, including two terms as the organization's president. And despite the fact that his own shoeing career goes back to the 1970s, he still consults with Jack Miller, the Texas farrier he first rode with all those years ago.

"I call Jack regularly," he says. "He's a very active mentor. I still ask him to help me with horses."

2:04 p.m. Once Nolan's feet are prepped, Matousek leads him into a nearby vacant stall. Hayden prepares the shoes one at a time, shaping and finishing them with his grinder. Sparks fly and there's plenty of noise, but none of it

seems to bother Nolan, who seems more interested in getting to know the horses in the stalls next to his temporary quarters.

2:14 p.m. Once all four shoes are ready, Matousek brings Nolan back into the shoeing area. Hayden once again cautions him not to use any of the power tools and hot fits the shoes, moving quickly from hoof to hoof, making a few minor adjustments on a stall jack, then nailing each one in place.

2:27 p.m. Once the shoes are in place, Matousek taps the clips in and finishes the hooves, with Hayden making a final inspection on each one.

2:41 p.m. While the next horse is on its way, Hayden takes a quick look at Trigger, the horse who had thrown a shoe.

"One good thing about this barn is that I get along with the other shoers who work here," he says. "I'll tack this back on and the owner won't have to call out her own farrier. And he'd do the same for me."

2:46 p.m. Hayden inspects Trigger's left front hoof, which is missing the shoe. He points out that some hoof wall has been torn away

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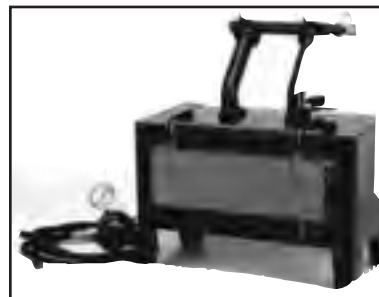
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when the shoe was lost, so he decides he'll replace it with a smaller shoe.

He takes a few minutes to prep the foot with his nippers and rasp before shaping the shoe and nailing on the new shoe.

2:50 p.m. Joe Kennedy, the horse Matousek earlier arranged to have brought over, is ready by the time Hayden is done with Trigger. The horse is one that Hayden had shod several years earlier. He was handled by other farriers for awhile, but recently came back under Hayden's care.

Hayden suspects the horse is affected with ring bone in its right front foot, where he has "restricted mobility." He says shoeing the horse is largely a matter of making him as comfortable as possible.

3:11 p.m. Hayden carefully trims Joe Kennedy's hooves, paying particular attention to the right front. He shoes the horse with egg bars and pads and packs the front feet with oakum.

3:37 p.m. After Hayden has nailed the shoes in place, he has Matousek finish the hooves. Matousek tries to use a foot stand to finish the fronts, but at first Joe Kennedy isn't cooperative. Hayden tells

Matousek that he needs to get his own body lower to put the horse at ease.

"You have to make the horse comfortable," he says. "And that means you have to realize that you're going to be uncomfortable."

3:45 p.m. After Joe Kennedy has been led back toward his stall, Hayden and Matousek begin packing up the rig. Hayden tells me that shoeing five horses is a fairly typical day for him.

"If you want to do expensive shoeing, you have to shoe expensive horses..."

"I don't like to shoe more than five," he says, "although obviously during the busy seasons or because of emergencies, I may have to."

4:08 p.m. Hayden says he likes to control his day so that he can have time to spend with his family. He and his wife are both avid skiers, so it's nice to have some energy left from a days work for his hobbies.

Take today for instance. It's only a little after 4 p.m., he's on his way home on a beautiful New Hampshire afternoon with plenty of time to relax — and shoe Nicholas, the "big horse" of his draft shoeing team.

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