



## **HORSEBALL – and the ABRS**

The ABRS has linked up with Horseball to offer all ABRS members the opportunity to introduce Horseball into their schools.

We see this as an opportunity to increase income for schools, allowing you to offer this exciting and growing sport to your existing clients and maybe attract new ones. It is a game that all schools can take part in – it is not only for speedy young people who want to hurl themselves around a school!!

The ABRS and Horseball would love to develop a competition where teams from schools take part at a basic level and who knows where that could lead? Maybe one of your clients could be at the next WEG!!

Please read this flyer carefully, if you have any questions then please contact Jim. We will also be holding demonstrations which we will invite you all to come to and see the potential for yourselves.

To help schools get going Horseball have made a fantastic offer – read on for more details.....

### **What is Horseball**

Horseball has been compared to a cross between rugby and basketball on horseback and was invented by Jean-Paul Depons, a riding instructor and former rugby player from the Bordeaux region in France.

The game, loosely based on the National sport of Argentina, Pato, was created as an exercise to improve skill and discipline between horse and rider.

Since its introduction in France, the country now boasts an impressive 600 teams nationwide and numbers for this popular sport continue to grow.

Horseball was introduced into Britain in the 90s and is a relatively new equestrian sport, so this is a great opportunity to get into a developing and fast growing field.

The governing body here is the British Horseball Association who are a member of the BEF. Horseball is recognised by the FEI and has been included in several of the WEG competitions in Europe including most recently the U16 Championships at Bishop Burton summer 2018.





At the highest level Horseball is a quick and physical game but despite this it has an excellent safety record.

As with any equestrian sport you have the best horses and riders at the top but it is a game that can be played by anyone from the lead rein up, riding Shetlands to Shires (not necessarily at the same time!)

## **Why Horseball**

- Improves the riding and confidence of your clients
- Introduces a real fun element and encourages team spirit
- Helps recruit new clients and liveries and ultimately retain them
- Riding is predominately a female orientated sport but Horseball is proving a real draw for boys and men that might otherwise have discontinued at an early age or not started in the first place
- Provides another source of income

## **Getting started – how we can help**

If you want to get started we can send a trainer to assist \*

For the first session we like about 90 minutes to enable us to teach the basics and get to the riders to play a very simple game.

With a competent and interested instructor our trainer can give you some exercises to do for the next 3 weeks or so and then we can return to take you a bit further.

We also run regular Horseball instructor's courses so we can help to train your trainers in the sport\*

\*Please note there will be a small charge to send a trainer, depending on where you are in the country to cover expenses. The same applies

## **The next step**

If there is demand, and we are confident that there will be, then we will help organise an inter riding school tournament whereby teams travel to other centres and use their horses to play, on a home and away basis. We can structure a Riding Centre membership and experience is that many may buy their own horse and go on to compete nationally.

## **Frequently Asked Questions & Information:**

### ***Q What size arena do we need?***

A Horseball is designed to be played in a manège, ideally 60m x 20m minimum, but a smaller arena is absolutely fine to use to learn the ropes and to play a practise match.





**Q What equipment will we need?**

**A** Normal riding clothes & horse tack plus:

Bandages or boots and over-reach boots on all 4 legs of the horse.

A standing martingale – (mandatory for games but a breastplate is sufficient for practice initially)

Protective rider knee boots are optional

A few horseballs (with harness)

Pick up straps for all riders in a session

A goal, though a hula hoop on the end of a scaffold pole will suffice at the start

**Q How much does the Horseball equipment cost?**

**A** Pick up straps                   £25.00 each

    Horseball & harness       £60.00 each

    The rules are free available from the BHA or The FIHB websites.

**Q What age can people Start?**

**A** If you can sit on a horse and throw/catch on the ground you can play. On the continent players start as young as 4 on Shetland size ponies. It depends what range of ponies you have to offer. Have a look on facebook at **Goldsmith Stables – Mini Horseball** you will see what is possible. We have some people still playing at 70 years old.

**Q Is my Horse/pony suitable for Horseball?**

**A** In the last 25 years, thousands of horses and ponies all over the world have successfully competed in Horseball. Thoroughbreds, cobs, Shetlands, race-horses, show jumpers and show ponies. Most compete in other disciplines as well as in Horseball. There is no ‘typical’ Horseball horse although at the top level of the game players are generally using a sport horse of the thoroughbred type.

**Q How do I train my horse/pony to play Horseball?**

**A** Most horses take to horseball easily but it can be worth taking time to familiarise your horse with the ball slowly at first over a few days. To play a game they will need to be comfortable being in close proximity with other horses and must not bite or kick. In time the idea is to school as for dressage as those skills will pay off in a game situation where control is key.



**Q *What will happen when I let go of my reins?***

**A** Most horses do relatively little when you let go but after a couple of training sessions, even the keenest of horses steady down because they realise that all they have to do is to go up and down an arena with the rest of the 'herd'.

Horseball helps to improve the horses own balance (as well as the riders) as they cannot rely on the reins to help them, this in turn, steadies them down naturally.

**Q *Will picking up the ball hurt my horses back?***

**A** If the rider is trained to pick the ball in the correct way, they use the strap as oppose the dragging on the saddle – this has no effect on the horses back whatsoever. In 25 years of Horseball in the UK, we have had no horses or ponies with specific Horseball related back injuries.

**Q *How fit and athletic do I need to be?***

**A** To play at a basic level riders do not have to be amazingly fit. There are riders in their 50's and 60's who take part perfectly well. With practise and improvement in technique as with any sport, it only gets easier

**Q *Will I be able to pick up the ball?***

**A** Firstly, the most important thing is not to actually drop the ball, secondly you play as part of a team of four/six some of whom may be more athletic than you, lastly, everyone is always surprised as to how easy it is to actually pick the ball up – we have quite a few non-athletic people young and old who manage perfectly well with practise

**Q *I show jump/dressage already – will Horseball ruin my other disciplines?***

**A** On the contrary – Horseball improves both rider and horse's balance and fitness which helps with any other discipline you choose to do. Because Horseball competitions are only during the summer, many riders prefer to play Horseball in the summer (when the ground is so hard) as it is mostly played on a 'surface'. The winter can then be taken up with indoor jumping and dressage or cross country.

**Horseball Case Studies to Consider**

**1/. Grove Riding School, High Wycombe.**

The Grove started with a have a go session 3 years ago. They enjoyed it so much that they started to train & play regularly and in the end decided to play in the National league using rented Polo ponies.

This year as Grove Horseball Club they have 2 teams entered in the National League. Only 2 of the 12 or so players were customers at the beginning of all this. David Bond has 4 more liveries and 10 more customers training once a week to improve. Out of those 10





more customers half are men. Most of these sessions are in a 20x40m arena which is perfectly adequate for training.

In addition to the club, the riding school runs monthly 'Have a go' sessions which regularly attract 10 or more new faces at £30 each and on average at least 1 or 2 of these each month have gone on to become regular school customers.

All the Instructors have realised the benefits of incorporating Horseball skills into regular lessons at all levels. Lead rein children gain confidence from letting go of the reins and concentrating on throwing and catching whilst unconsciously becoming more balanced and developing their seat. This continues through to experienced adults by adding fun to the learning whilst giving a purpose to dressage training for those not inclined to compete.

David has now qualified as a BHA coach and 3 pony clubs and a neighbouring riding school use his services to train them periodically.

### **The Grove – Some extraordinary results**

We have a 7yo Boy who suffers from Dyspraxia came to a have a go session. His mother was concerned as he was unable to play football with his friends due to a lack of coordination and despite having his own pony interest in riding was sporadic. After an hour mum was in tears as the distraction of riding enabled him to throw catch and score goals like a professional.

We are now in trouble as the lad spends his entire time when not on his pony watching horseball on youtube!

We have an adult rider who has jumped a little but was very nervous. She was initially extremely reluctant to let go of the reins and thought pick ups were way beyond her. Horseball skills were gradually introduced into her lessons and today 2 ½ years later she captains a team in the British league and has her own horse.

### **2/. Lee Valley Riding Centre Hackney**

Lee Valley were pioneers in central London with Horseball and for many years had successful Senior and Junior teams using mainly school horses. Gradually players purchased their own horses, however a change of management lead to Lee Valley dropping Horseball due to lack of management interest.

Jim Copeland has a livery yard on the outskirts of London. 12 of the 18 horses and ponies at his yard came from disgruntled liveries who wanted to keep playing. Some customers from Central London without their own ponies travel from as far away as Luton to keep





playing on school ponies. We anticipate that 4 of the 8 under 16 players for the 2019 European Cup are ex-Lee Valley customers.

### **Where do we go from here??**

*If you would like to try a session we would suggest that ideally you book 4 weeks in advance for a trainer to come and get you started. During this period you can assess the demand and viability within your own centre. An interested instructor from your own stables could work with the BHA trainer to learn the basics. After 4 weeks, you could then use your instructor to work through exercises proposed by the trainer and the trainer could return for say 1 session a month to move things on. All these are flexible depending on your own involvement.*

*After 4 weeks you will be able to assess the viability of investing in balls and pick up straps (ideally to sell pick up straps to your regular customers) and have a few for hire. We would anticipate the cost of a trainer to be £40.00 - £60.00 per session.*

*Beyond that, the next step could possibly be to arrange a small competition at yours or another riding centre using the local horses.*

### **Trainers Courses**

*If there was demand from the ABRs schools we could organise one structured directly for members, which could also if desired include a ridden section. For further information please contact Liz McIlwraith, Hannah Mays or Jim Copeland at the BHA [jimbha@outlook.com](mailto:jimbha@outlook.com)*

