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## **A Discussion on Tack and Strategic Planning.**

Your tack, including stirrups, allows a rider to maximize their control of the horse during pleasure rides, training and in the heat of competition. Good tack provides control and safety and, when used properly, promotes effective training and allows you to be more competitive.

The test of good tack is not how it performs in the best of times, but how it performs in the worst of times. When things get difficult, out of control or downright dangerous, will your tack be there for you and your horse? If you have children or students, will their tack be there for them as well?

MDC Stirrups™ patented design is forward facing allowing for a natural leg and foot position. This enhanced design provides two significant benefits to riders of all ages: more reliable retrieval and increased release during a fall for improved safety. The design of our high traction, ultra-low profile treads allows for greater support, increased comfort and higher traction, while not being overly aggressive. We do not make overly light stirrups for this reason: overly light stirrups may feel good when everything is going right, but they will tend to 'fly away' when lost compared to stirrups with a sufficient weight. Stirrups with some residual weight will hang true and be easier to retrieve. It is the nature of traditional stirrups to turn back to the horse when lost and as they flatten to the horse, often they are difficult or even unavailable for retrieval. As the stirrup flattens, they are more prone to catch a falling rider's foot. There is no positive benefit to a stirrup whose natural position is flat against the horse's side.

As a judge of two Olympic Games, I have personally seen riders invest their entire riding career to reach this one competitive moment only to ride through the triple without their stirrups! This is poor, strategic planning for riding at any level, much less the Olympic Games. In his classic book, "Reflections on Riding and Jumping", William Steinkraus states "when the money or the medals are on the line, I urge you to take every legal advantage you can." This is strategic thinking.

Whatever type of riding you are enjoying, when you lose your stirrup, you want it back and you want it back right now! No one rides better without their stirrups, especially in an emergency. In 2010, Gold Medal Rider, Eric Lamaze wrote in his blog of a lost stirrup at Spruce Meadows that did not come back to him, causing him to voluntarily circle before jumping a large combination. This lost stirrup cost him \$675,000.00!! His stirrup of choice that day was an all-aluminum, light weight stirrup, with no forward facing advantages.

MDC Stirrups™ should be part of your overall strategic planning as they are better positioned, properly weighted, more available for quick retrieval and they are safer. MDC Stirrups™ will be there when you need them. Your MDC Stirrups™ are designed for reliable performance, comfort and safety not by an engineer, but by a professional horseman of over 48 years who understands the needs of other riders.

Strategic (stra·te·gic), adjective: **strategic**

1. relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them