Book Review


*The Dynamic Horse* by Hilary Clayton is ‘equine biomechanics for beginners’. Rather like *Conditioning Sport Horses* (also Sport Horse Publications), the book is made up of bite-sized pieces of information that build into a very informative text. Following a brief introduction, there are three main sections covering kinematics, kinetics and locomotion. *The Dynamic Horse* will be a valuable text for students in equine or animal science, or indeed anyone who needs to navigate themselves through the rapidly advancing field of equine biomechanics. Every principle is introduced briefly (i.e. in one or two sentences) followed by one or more examples. The example used to illustrate momentum is a horse crashing through a post and rail fence whilst the example used to illustrate conservation of angular momentum is a horse negotiating a show jump. Those readers embarking on the study of equine biomechanics without the benefit of a preliminary physics course will find these far more user-friendly than the more predictable examples of colliding cars and spinning ballet dancers, particularly as most of the examples are also beautifully illustrated by Susan Harris.

The section on Locomotion includes a comprehensive account of the temporal and linear characteristics of 21 different gaits. This is a valuable reference section, but leaves little time for discussion of applied biomechanics, including the extent to which research has contributed to our knowledge of the factors affecting athletic performance and soundness. Judging by the popularity of Hilary’s lecture tours attended by audiences made up of riders, trainers, physiotherapists and vets, there would still seem to be scope for a text which leads on from the basic principles and helps the rider/trainer assimilate some of the research findings directly applicable to their sport.

*The Dynamic Horse* provides the basic tools with which the reader can go on to study equine biomechanics in more depth and a useful bibliography is provided for this purpose. The book will no doubt become a key text for a whole generation of animal science students and is a useful precursor to the hugely popular *Equine Locomotion*.

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