



PRODUCT FEATURE

The Double Sling Strap ensures that soft tissue stays correctly aligned and helps prevent hyperextension.

# new & noteworthy

What exactly is the Iconoclast boot, and how did its creation come about?  
By Bridget Cook

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**I**nnovation is more often than not born of necessity. In 2006, Ward Heid had a run of bad luck. Within 30 short days, three of his horses injured their suspensory ligaments. Physically, the horses were different. One mare was by High Brow Cat out of a mare that had won \$80,000 in National Cutting Horse Association events. Another was a gelding used for cutting sired by Dual Jazz and out of a Smart Little Lena mare. The third horse was a big, stout Sun Frost-bred barrel mare.

As with many suspensory injuries, the competitive future of all three horses was grim. In fact, the prognosis was that with a lot of care and effort, perhaps the two mares would be

sound enough to be broodmares and the gelding a pasture ornament.

After many visits to the vet, Heid came to realize that equine rehabilitation can sometimes be sorely disappointing. He found few products on the market to aid with rehabbing injuries in the sesamoid region, such as suspensory tears and deep digital flexor pain.

As he continued to battle his horses' lameness, he became more vexed, and when talking with consulting veterinarian Chris Ray of Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery, Heid asked, "Suspensory injuries are common and can be career ending. Why isn't there something more?"

Ray answered with a challenge.

"I have a theory," he said. "If you can come up with something that can strengthen this region of the horse by way of a wedge, and support it, then we can give that horse a better chance of full recovery."

That statement was the catalyst Heid needed. After years of trial and error, conferring with Ray and rehabbing horses, Heid developed a rehabilitative boot that utilizes an EVA foam wedge to support the horse's pastern and soft tissue. The boot is called the Iconoclast Orthopedic Sport Boot.

"One of the things we were trying to achieve was additional suspensory support," Heid said. "What we've found in rehabilitating horses is that by applying a wedge in that region with



The Iconoclast boot can be used with a bell boot.

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the Double Sling Strap system to hold it in place, is that we've amplified the support that a horse has to those suspensory ligaments as they are extending, especially during rehabilitation."

One of the obstacles of returning a horse to competition after a suspensory tear is that the suspensory will usually have scar tissue that inhibits its elasticity. The tissue will repair itself in a cross-hatch pattern, but the inferior scar tissue will become the weakest point in the ligament from that point forward.

"If we can eliminate the scarring, we can put the tissue back into normal function," Heid said. "By rehabilitating with the wedge, we have a smoother and more comprehensive recovery because we reduce the amount of scar tissue being built on those injuries."

A fourth generation rancher, Heid built the boot through a process of trial and error. He began by hand stitching prototypes, showing them to Ray and other veterinarians to get their input, using the boots and pulling them apart again until he achieved the desired function and fit.

Then he tried the boots on the three injured horses that inspired him to start the process. The Sun Frost mare wore the Iconoclast Rehab boot for seven months.

"She was in a stall," he said. "I'd hydro the mare and massage the leg. At the end of seven months, she was moving so well that I thought I needed to go get her another sonogram to see how bad the injury was. When we started rehab, the suspensory branch had a hole in it as big as a quarter. The fetlock should've collapsed, but it didn't. When I got her sonogramed again, the hole was non-existent. Dr Ray said, 'Ward, I don't know what all you did, but this mare shows zero blemish. The

best I can tell you is to go ride the mare and see what happens.'

"That was two years ago, and the mare's never taken a bad step," Heid said. "I use her as a turn back horse. I doctor sick cows with her. If I need to rope something and drag it off, then she's the one I use. She gets used hard, and she hasn't taken a bad step since."

Both of the cutting horses also made full recoveries and have returned to the competition pen.

### About the Boots

The Iconoclast boot was designed to support the suspensory and sesamoidal areas of the horse. A Rehabilitation boot and an Orthopedic Sports boot are also available.

The Orthopedic boot is used on competi-

tive horses that have no realized issues, while the Rehabilitation boot is most often used on horses that are recovering from, or have early stage, injuries.

The main difference between the boots is the orthopedic wedge in the Rehabilitation boot. The wedge is positioned behind the distal pastern. Its function is to provide vertical support to the deep digital flexor tendon and suspensory ligaments by dispersing the impact shock of each hoof strike. This additional support gives horses that have deep digital flexor pain or digital bursa pain the opportunity to go back to work.

Healthy horses can also benefit from the Rehabilitation boot, especially those with long pasterns, as it increases the rate of break over.

Both boots feature the Double Sling Strap, which secures the boot under the pastern. The Double Sling Strap aids in securing the horse's leg to minimize hyperextension, which is the over-stretching of ligaments and tendons.

During normal movement, when the hoof strikes the ground, the fetlock is depressed towards the ground. This causes concussive forces to be transferred from the hoof to the suspensory ligaments and tendons. Maximum force and stretch is applied to the tendons and ligaments when the fetlock is closest to the ground, and it is at this point when hyperextension is most likely to occur. The cradling effect of the Double Sling Strap helps stop the fetlock from depressing too far, thus aiding in preventing hyperextension.

The Double Sling Strap also has a non-torsional design, which means that soft tissue,



The Rehabilitation boot can be used on horses recovering from injury or horses predisposed to injury.

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such as ligaments and tendons, stay in correct alignment when the boots are put on. Pulling the soft tissue out of alignment, as can occur when traditional leg supports are incorrectly applied, imbalances the structure of the leg and can increase the risk of injury. Incorrect use of traditional supports has been known to cause bowed tendons.

### Better at Barrels?

Alvarado, Texas, barrel racer Tracey Henderson began using Iconoclast boots after she was given a set by Heid.

“He had told me that there was a girl up North whose horse had gotten faster since she had started using the boots,” she said. “I couldn’t fathom how a set of boots could make a horse run faster, but I saw it for myself when I started using them.”

Henderson’s mare, War Lena Kitty, was a solid 2D horse that sometimes ran in the bottom of the 1D in North Texas competition.

“When I started using the boots, she immediately got half a second faster at arenas that I knew,” she said. “For example, the Lone Star Arena at Stephenville, she consistently ran a 15.9 or a 16.0, and my very first run there in those boots, she clocked a 15.5. She had never run that fast there, and that was even with mistakes. The only thing I had changed was the boots.

“It was that way everywhere I went. She started clocking in the 1D.”

While it is not a scientifically proven assertion, Henderson believes the speed increase is due to the Double Sling Strap that secures underneath the horse’s fetlock. Henderson is now an Iconoclast dealer.

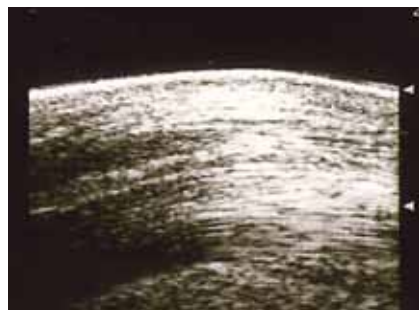
“The sling helps their ankle spring back up, so it quickens their step because they don’t have to strain so hard to pick their foot up in order to take that next step,” she said. “It works as a spring and springs them forward.”

Well-known barrel racer Jackie (Dube) Jatzlau tried the boots after two friends had recommended them to her.

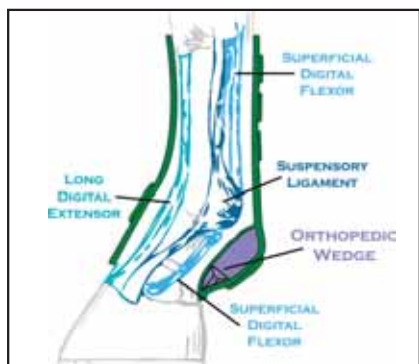
“I approached him (Heid) and asked if I could put them through the wringer,” she said. “He sent me one pair of boots, and I put them on every horse that I threw a leg over.

“I tried to tear them apart, and they held up really good, and I saw improvement with every one of my horses. I just really like the way the boots fit.”

Jatzlau, who is now a dealer for Iconoclast,



(Left) Before rehabilitation, the Sun Frost mare had a hole in her suspensory branch the size of a quarter. (Right) After seven months of wearing the Iconoclast Rehab boot, the Sun Frost mare showed no sign of her injury.



(Left) The orthopedic wedge in the Rehabilitation boot is located under the distal pastern. (Right) Ward Heid, of Western Legacy Sales, developed the Iconoclast Orthopedic Sports Boots and Rehabilitation Boots.

feels that now she doesn’t have to do as much leg therapy after working a horse. She also acknowledges that girls have seen improvements on the clock.

“I would never say that a boot is what makes a horse run faster, but one of the things I teach, and one of the reasons I’m successful on a lot of different horses, is confidence,” she said. “I think that speed and being aggressive is all about confidence, not only in yourself, but in your horse.

“I think a horse that is sure-footed and pain-free is confident, and I think that’s where they make a difference time-wise is with confidence.”

Before making the change to Iconoclast, Jatzlau had been using polo wraps on her primary rodeo mount, Imanonstop Princess.

“Princess had a strained tendon back in 2007, so it’s always something I’ve been concerned with,” Jatzlau said.

South Dakotan Jennifer Zeller has been riding barrel horses for the public for the past three years. She decided to try Iconoclast boots after hearing of Ray’s involvement in their development.

“I know that he is just a really good leg vet, and I trust him,” she said. “I had too many friends [dealing] with suspensory issues, so when I got an email that Dr. Ray had helped develop the boot, I thought that it was a boot that I needed to try.”

Zeller’s main horse has just recovered from injury and returned to competition. She has found that the boots are helping her horse stop paddling and track straighter.

“She has a really long pastern, and she kind of goes a little east and west with her front feet,” she said, “and I feel they help suck all that up a lot more than I can do with a polo wrap.”

Zeller also likes that fact that the boots are light and easy to put on.

“You can’t screw them up,” she said. “They come in small, medium and large, and you fit them based on the width of the horse’s cannon bone, so you can get a better fit for the horse, and you don’t get dirt in the boots.”

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