



Natural talent enhanced with carefully-plotted care.

While Center Court's resume already outpaces those of performance horses with twice the mileage, the spectacular Hunter Derby star appears to be only just getting started. Campaigned by John French for longtime owner and friend, Kristen Hiller, Center Court has dominated the division since he splashed onto the national scene as High Performance Hunter champion at the Washington International Horse show as a 6-year-old.



The now 9-year-old started 2017 as Grand Circuit Reserve Champion High Performance Hunter at HITS Coachella and finished it with a repeat victory in the National Sunshine Series' \$50,000 International Hunter Derby.

John saw a video of the 16.3 hand bay as a 4-year-old, on the U.K. website horsequest.uk. By Ustinov, the Dutch-bred horse's registered name is Escobillo, hence his barn name "Billy." He had gone through his stallion approval with a big, bold jump that appealed to the renowned rider. Had Billy been a little faster, the jumper ring could easily have been his specialty.

Getting to the top is one thing and staying there is another. When Center Court stopped in San Juan Capistrano for the Blenheim EquiSports Spring Series, we visited to get the scoop on the care routines involved in these first chapters of his already impressive success story.

Physical

To loosen up his back muscles, Billy spends 20 minutes wearing a BEMER electromagnetic blanket before each day's work-out and sometimes after, too. Increasing circulation is the idea behind this therapy used for horses and people. His legs are iced and wrapped on jumping days. At home, a 30-minute session on the Theraplate vibration therapy platform promotes overall well-being in the body, explains Waldenbrook assistant trainer Theresa Petyo-Wallace.

John's Waldenbrook Farm is based at Templeton Farms Equestrian in the Paso Robles area. Lots of room to move around is a big asset for the big horse. His stall opens onto a 12' by 24' run in which he spends much of his day. Turn-out time is another daily occurrence, although his tendency to get fat limits his time on the irrigated grass pasture to two hours.

Billy tends toward boredom, so his team welcomes ways to keep him fit and schooled on minimal arena time. Templeton Farms has a mile-long fenced perimeter track that is slightly hilly. That's where much of his at-home flat schools take place, with the mild ups and downs offering conditioning benefits that serve him well over fences. "He loves that and is very willing and happy to work out there," Theresa reports. Forty-five minutes sessions on the facility's large, oval-shaped Kraft Brothers Eurociser are another part of his at-home daily routine. All combined, it adds up to many hours of movement that comprise the best approach to joint and overall body health.

Swimming is one form of exercise Billy gets excited about. After the USHJA International Hunter Derby Championships last year, he went to an equine spa in Northern California every day to swim. Swimming five days a week for a month, he came home stronger than ever, Theresa notes.

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