

courages the rider to sit with a straight pelvis so the leg falls in place correctly. “The weight stays under the rider so the horse can elevate,” said representative Peter Menet. “We build saddles from the classical training scale,” he added, referring to the German training system.

Passier’s Relevant saddle (3) was designed with the cooperation of the top dressage rider in the U.S., Lisa Wilcox. She rode this saddle at the 2003 National Dressage Symposium in Dallas, praising its performance before an audience of

700 dressage enthusiasts. The Relevant, named after her champion horse, has a deep seat that centers the rider.

### Style Introductions

Established brands showed new models at the show that blend horse-friendly construction with styles for the show ring.

B.T. Crump has released an updated version of its classic Prix de Saute (4) with the 21st Century suffix. “The seat has a little more depth,” said Crump marketing manager Judy Layne. “The



# Saddle Innovation Watch List

**T**O HELP RIDERS understand which saddles match their needs, they should learn about construction details that improve saddle performance. Listings here highlight some of the exhibitors at KOP whose innovations promote comfort for horse and rider.

## PANELS

### What they do

Panels contact the horse’s back on either side of the spine and make the saddle fit the horse. They also carry the weight of saddle and rider.

### Why you should care

Softer, flexible panels mold to the horse. Gussets make the saddle’s panels wider for a larger bearing surface that makes it easier for the horse to carry weight. Panels can be of closed cell foam or traditional wool flocking—each material has its advantages. Foam is low-maintenance; flocking can be adjusted to fit a horse’s conformation.

### Solutions from these companies

Thornhill closed cell foam with Dupont Elvax and wool felt.

Marcel Toulouse “Comfort Fit” panel with foam and wool.

Amerigo wool-flocked panels independent from the tree to flex with the horse. B.T. Crump wider panels with polyurethane foam to distribute weight more evenly.

Passier Relevant (dressage) gusseted panel with extra leather insert.

Whitaker memory latex panels to re-

tain shape.

Sommer panels with natural felt filled and synthetic wool.

## POINTS OF THE TREE

### What they do

Points of the tree can press harder into horse’s withers and shoulders than other parts of the saddle, restricting the horse’s freedom of movement.

### Why you should care

Shorter points, or no points at all, make the tree more comfortable. Short points are placed higher on the horse, so the saddle still remains in place, but the horse can get his shoulders up to jump or lengthen stride.

### Solutions from these companies

Laser CM Ultimate tree (5) with no points (dressage).

L’Apogee ATM (jumping).

Whitaker EX2 (jumping).

Prestige Galileo (dressage).

Frank Baines Expanded Point System

with point separated onto a Velcro pad to absorb point pressure.

## TREE WIDTH & FLEXION

### What they do

The width of the tree across the withers affects how the panels conform to the horse. Flexible molded trees adjust to the horse’s shape.

### Why you should care

A broad channel that clears the horse’s back keeps the tree off the spine. Riders know the importance of matching tree width to their horse’s conformation.

### Solutions from these companies

Prestige Galileo saddle with flexible nylon tree and shorter panels for freedom of shoulder movement.

Whitaker EX2 injection-molded tree flexes.

Frank Baines angled tree to expand points yet maintain support of panels. Sommer Opus I with Esprit flexible tree.

## SEAT SHAPES

### What they do

Adjust the rider’s position to ease pressure on the horse’s back.

### Why you should care

Riders want to feel comfortable, but not at the horse’s expense.

### Solutions from these companies

Passier Relevant saddle.

Amerigo Cervia product line.

Frank Baines saddles and Reflex trees, with wide panel and narrow seat.

Thornhill soft seats with closed cell foam.

