

A Modest Proposal

What would a good Civil War re-enactment be without the Blue and the Gray? Or Creative Anachronists without their armor? Clarence Thomas without his voluminous black robes? Or FEI competition without top hats and tail coats?

Wait, you say top hats are already being legislated out of fashion, if not out of existence? Well, that brings up an interesting question—if we aren't going to sport traditional headgear, maybe it's time to ditch the undertaker's coats as well.

"No!" you're thinking, "I've struggled all these years with my horse to earn the right to put on my shadbelly. You can't take that away from me!"

But, really, put yourself in the shoes of the ESPN crowd. Not of dowagers who like to pretend that their mothers were all the Queen of England, but actual sports fans. Given that "normal people" already think that horseback riding must be easy, do you think they can relate to so-called athletes dressed up like we're going to a duel? They just think we're either unbearably pretentious or downright silly.



So what's the alternative? Please, until I die, no glitter! No Spiderman outfits. No camo. But if we excluded the Flo-Jo/Lindsey Vonn look, what about a tracksuit-like outfit? Colors but not too rainbow-y to distract from the horse. I think we'd all get used to it pretty quickly, and frankly, showing in Florida while wearing a costume designed to protect me from gales coming off the Baltic has never made a whole lot of sense!

While we're on the subject of popularizing our sport for the audience *toto mondial*—especially the all-important male 18-30 demographic—why not take a page from international tennis? Yes, use of the voice as unauthorized assistance should be penalized, but why not permit women riders to **grunt**? It's part of the appeal of Seles, Sharapova, and company. It gets guys into a Bud can-crushing frenzy as they drool at their 56 inch plasma screens. If we're going to be modern, we might as well go all the way!