

Former jockey Pat Hyland believes modern riding style is contributing to spate of recent falls

• by: Daryl Timm- Herald Sun - June 16, 2014 10:00PM

MELBOURNE CUP-winning jockey Pat Hyland wants riders to drastically change their riding style, urging them to go back to the way horses were once ridden.

Hyland believes the current style adopted by the majority of jockeys, who ride with only the ball of their feet or toes on the stirrup iron, is dangerous and has contributed to falls recently.

The 72-year-old trainer, who still rides some of his gallopers in track work at Cranbourne, said the jockeys should return to the old style of having their feet completely in the irons to give them leverage and more control over their horses.

Pat Hyland is worried the toes-in-the-irons style is increasing the likelihood of bad falls.

“When I learnt to ride my boss told me that your legs are as important as are your arms and now they don’t use their legs because they are on their tiptoes in the irons and you have these kids being taught to ride like that or want to ride like that,” Hyland said.

“I don’t think that professional jockeys should be allowed to ride with their toes in the irons, but I’ve spoken to stewards about it and they don’t seem to be bothered about it.”

Hyland, whose long list of successes as a jockey included riding What a Nuisance to victory in the 1985 Melbourne Cup, said that Sydney jockey Hugh Bowman is one of the few jockeys who rides with his feet fully in the irons.

“I’ve never known in my time in racing so many jockeys that have been killed or maimed as they have been over the past five or six years,” Hyland said.

“It’s a dreadful thing and they are all falling and they are having neck and head injuries — every one of them.”

Hyland said he made no secret of his concerns with jockeys and says he has told “every bloody one of them”.

He asked whether past champion jockeys, including Roy Higgins, Jack Purtell and Bill Williamson, were that bad by riding with their feet in the irons that the style had to be changed.

“When you want to fix something you have to go to the problem,” he said. “You can’t get someone else to fix it.

“When we used to fall, back in my day and I can only quote that, you never fell from a horse’s height. If you clipped heels and a horse went down, you went down to the ground with it and then fell off or it tipped you off. But these blokes are getting tipped off from a height and blokes are going out the barriers losing an iron and falling off.”

Hyland said would have so much more control if they rode with feet in the irons and a shorter rein. “You would then be in absolute control of the animal,” he said.

“You have to stabilize yourself and you can’t stabilize yourself on your big toe. I don’t understand jockeys who are getting on a bit, why they are also doing it.”