The Parelli FUSION™ Saddle:
The result of a 2+-year collaboration project between Linda and Pat Parelli, US Saddle Makers and The Balance Saddle Team from England.

PLEASE NOTE: OUR SADDLEMAKERS ARE CURRENTLY BOOKED CRAFTING CUSTOM SADDLES FOR EXISTING RESERVATIONS THROUGH MID SEPTEMBER 2005. Reservation ORDERS taken from this point forward will be produced following those. We estimate that we can produce 35 to 40 saddles per month.

Key problems in the "normal" saddle world:
Many saddles are not built to help horses use their whole bodies when they move, especially when it comes to flexion (laterally and vertically). Many are also designed to sit on or right behind the shoulder and to "fit" a horse's back at rest, yet when a horse starts moving, the shoulders need more room and the back needs to come up. As a result, horses can develop unnatural postures and ways of moving to protect themselves from saddles that are restrictive and even painful.

Key benefits of the revolutionary Parelli FUSION™ Saddle:
In the process of researching and developing her ideas of "Fluidity" in riding, Linda Parelli found that saddles restricted both riders and horses from becoming more fluid and being able to use their whole bodies to move with balance and efficiency (let alone enhance the horse's ability to "collect"!)

Determined to make positive changes, she brought together top designers who make saddles for both Pat and herself, resulting in the aptly named Fusion Saddle... a breakthrough in design fusing the best English and Western saddle making to develop the ideal tool for natural horsemanship.

The Fusion Saddle has a western look, yet allows the rider to sit in an effective and balanced position and the horse to bend its body and flex its back. Not only does it offer instant results
to horses and riders of any level, it is especially beneficial for higher levels of the Parelli program (Levels 3 and 4) where vertical flexion and engagement become an important issue.

Strategically designed to help people sit on their balance point.

A. Great Women's saddle
The Fusion is light in weight (about 25 pounds), which makes it especially appealing to women.

B. Enables Fluidity
The Fusion makes riding with Fluidity easy: it encourages the horse to use his whole body because it doesn't trap the back and helps riders use their Balance Point.

C. For Levels 3 & 4, especially, it encourages horse to flex in the back and thru the body.

Promotes lateral and vertical flexion
Most saddles restrict and flatten the back (even hollow it) due to the length and shape of the bars. They also position the rider too far forward thus over weighting the forehand and preventing the horse from using his hindquarters. Flexion has to come from zone 3* and if this is trapped, the horse will simply curl his neck and not be able to shift his weight. This usually causes more strain on the lumbar region and fetlocks and jars the joints, especially knees, stifles and hocks.

D. Allows horse to move freely and use his whole body.
As above.

Parameters of Fit:
How to feel confident about your fit without having a chance to sit in the saddle: Read below, and compare your dimensions using the Fusion saddle sizing chart. In choosing a saddle, most of us really don't know what we are looking for. The criteria is often as simple as how nice it looks, how soft and comfy the seat is, and the saddle sitting flat on the horse's back without gaps... when the horse is at rest!

In Linda's experience, out of 30 saddles being tested by a class, only 3 to 4 worked for the rider and once measuring the underside, most didn't work for the horse.

MAIN PROBLEMS FOR THE RIDERS:

Rider selection criteria:
you can get on your balance point easily
your seat does not hit the cantle; cantle is low and appropriately sloped
your thighs are not restricted by the fork, buck rolls or thigh rolls
the seat is relatively flat and open as opposed to angled narrow in the “twist”
stirrup fenders are twisted to allow legs and feet to sit in an "open" position vs having toes pulled inwards and changing balance point
stirrups are hung in the middle of the saddle to allow a full range of leg movement as needed by the rider

Horse selection criteria:

- the first weight-bearing part of the tree sits back from the shoulders, at least 4 inches, thus allowing full range of movement of the scapula, yet not positioning the rider too far back

- **wide gullet**, doesn't trap the spine and its ligaments, distributes weight to the ribcage thus allowing the spine to arch and round. A wide gullet or channel gives the horse room to use and build his muscles

- **bars are not too long, not too short**; allow the horse to flex his body laterally yet still distribute the rider's weight over a larger surface underside of the saddle is padded to protect the horse

- **two cinches: front and back cinch which share the pressure instead of concentrating it behind the shoulders. The back cinch should fit snugly and also prevents side to side motion.** The cinch hobble is short (2 - 4 inches) thus bringing the back cinch forward over the ribcage instead of around the belly.

3 CHOICES OF SIZE: Please see sizing chart on the order form so that you can properly assess your fitting issues.
Size is dependent on: leg length, body style and cheek size! Leg length especially refers to thigh length from hip to mid knee, as this is most affected by the size of the seat.

**Petite or Small Size**: Whom do you know that would choose it? For slender riders with short to medium leg length, small cheeks! Linda Parelli, Gina Torrel, Cezanne, Evan

**Middle Regular Size**:
For some men and most women of short to medium height and leg length, cute to medium cheeks!
Examples: Letitia Glenn, Katja, Stef, Mel, Vonni, Shoey, Cammy, Aggie, Gena Warrington, Lesley-Anne, Jackie Chant, Sharon Lindy Nita Jo, Jake, John Kelley.

**Full (Big And Tall) Size**:
For most men, tall and slender and / or more substantial women, just right, medium to full
cheeks! Pat, Caton, Trevor, Don Knapp, Rob, David Lichman, David Ellis, Neil, Art Glenn, Steve Byrne, Craig Johnson, Bruce Logan, Susan Pritchett, Helen Topp, Mary Mingus.

When in doubt, choose the Larger size, Linda Parelli says, because more room is better than less room in a saddle.

TRUST LINDA
I need to ask for your trust here, says Linda. There should be no need to sit in the saddle to know if it's right because it's designed to be right! And if for any reason it does not feel right to you, there are plenty of people on the waiting list for a Fusion saddle so you will not be stuck! When it comes to the horse, it should work for almost every shape and size, except perhaps draft breeds! The Theraflex pad and shims actually are part of this grand design.

There will be D-rings, breast collar rings, bucking rolls (optional) and tie-down straps.

Importance of the Theraflex pad and shims as part of the Fusion package:
A good saddle pad is essential to the horse’s comfort and longevity because it should prevent pressure points, and create an interface between the constantly moving and reshaping back of the horse and the static saddle.

The Theraflex pad is designed to give the saddle a "custom fit" (without the restriction so often inherent to custom fitted saddles) because of the air-foam chambers. Essentially, the saddle should not fit the stationary horse but offer the muscles room to move and change shape.

The Theraflex pad provides maximum comfort, self-adjusts to fit the horse with each saddling, allows the muscles to flex and move, relieves pressure from the spine, breathes and releases heat, distributes pressure and prevents pressure points. It also has shims that can be positioned perfectly to relieve shoulder restriction and adjust the balance point of the saddle.

Savvy Club members:

YOU MAY HAVE A 5% DISCOUNT ON A Fusion Saddle THERAFLEX PAD IF YOU DON'T OWN ONE.

Therashims are needed for most horses due to their downhill posture or muscle wastage, and especially once the saddle is repositioned to give clearance to the shoulders which means it sits a little further back than most people are used to seeing.

WE WILL PROVIDE 2 PAIR OF SHIMS for your use with your saddle if you don’t already have some.
Our compliments with Fusion Saddle purchase.

There is now a Theraflex Fusion Pad especially designed for the Fusion saddle.

It is important that this saddle be ridden with that particular pad. Please read about it in the Theraflex pad section of this website.

More from Linda:
Dear students!

As you know I’ve been manically trying to develop a Fusion saddle by bringing together the talents and incredible knowledge of Carol Brett and Lesley Ann Taylor of Balance Saddles UK, and a number of US saddle makers. Some of you even got to test ride the prototypes or at least witness the amazing changes in the horses wearing it.

The Fusion saddle is now a reality. The final prototype was approved last September. (One of the last pieces I had been concerned about, after we had gone through 7 previous prototypes, was the shape and comfort of the seat for the rider. After sitting in it on a barrel, I decided to use the saddle in a demonstration during the Savvy Conference choosing an impulsive horse with a poorly muscled topline and rotated shoulders/scapula. As soon as the horse was saddled and asked to move around, she immediately dropped her head and stretched her back. When I rode her she was able to walk slowly and had no intention of rushing finding new mobility in her shoulders and the capacity to round her back, lower her head and transfer weight to the hindquarters. As tension went out of her body and her stride lengthened, the transformation was dramatic to say the least. Best of all, I forgot I was even riding in a western saddle which is an absolute first! The freedom it offered me to be in the right place for the horse and for using my balance point was right on.

Our next task was to find a team of saddle makers talented and skilled enough to reproduce the prototype in multiple, upholding our standards of quality, while keeping it affordable. Everything about this saddle was NEW! The preparation for production was a lengthy process. The shapes of the tree and ground seat were key, of course, and jigs and dies had to be designed and manufactured to insure accuracy. More prototypes finally arrived in late April 2005. (We had discovered that there was no way to make these saddles using a production assembly line sort of operation. Each saddle must be handcrafted with skill and loving care, utilizing the various pieces and parts that have been cut using the dies. We began building saddles for customers as of May 2. We anticipate that the first 30-45 saddles will be ready in the first 60 days, if all goes according to plan. We expect that, once they strike an efficient production rhythm, we can increase the number in months thereafter.

**INTRODUCTORY PRICE: $3,150 USD** Savvy Club members receive a 5% discount.
Each saddle is, essentially, a custom order built of exceptional materials with extraordinary workmanship.

**OTHER CHOICES for you to make:**

**TOOLING STAMP PATTERN OR NOT:**
We have designed a distinctive tooling pattern featuring a border stamp of the small Parelli horse heads. It is simplistic, but elegantly handsome, we think. You may chose to have them tooled into your saddle, or leave it plain with only the larger horse heads at each shoulder point, (see the illustrations) and on the top of the saddle horn.

**COLOR:**
You may choose either dark brown, medium brown (russet) or tan.
BUCKING ROLLS OR NOT:
Bucking Rolls will be optional. They are a helpful security feature for some people, but they do shorten up the seat a bit. You may remove them once they are installed, and they leave 2 small screw holes. Not obtrusive at all.

HOW TO ORDER YOUR SADDLE:
Those wishing to be in line for personal saddles must deposit 50% of the purchase price to hold a position. The balance of the purchase price will not be charged until your saddle is ready to ship.

You may fax your order to Parelli Canada at: 1-250-546-2774

PLEASE PRINT OUT THE ORDER FORM AND SIZING CHART (BELOW), FILL IT OUT AND FAX IT IN AS YOUR RESERVATION REQUEST

We will remain in touch with you via email.

I'm so excited to see this saddle project come to fruition thanks to the efforts and dedication of Carol and Lesley, Jeremiah, all of my students who helped us with R & D, Pat, Letitia and Art, Glenn, Norman Berliner and Jim Taylor and his staff. And I'm even more excited to hear from you once you start using it... or should I say from your horse!

Yours naturally,
Linda

FAQ'S:

How will my horse feel to me?
The stride will become smoother, often longer, the back will be able to round and stretch more, the horse will be more willing to give vertical flexion, to move with greater comfort (less impulsive, less argumentative, less displaced behaviors such as pinned ears and swishing tail). Note, despite the positive action of the saddle, some of this can be restricted if the rider is not on their balance point.

What sort of rigging comes with the saddle?
Billet & latigo, back cinch and cinch hobble are standard.(NOTE: THE CINCH HOBBLE IS SHORT FOR A REASON. ABOUT 4. IS PERFECT. The back cinch should angle toward the front cinch in a V shape. D-rings and tie straps (nice long ones) aplenty. . It's ready to go straight out of the box except for the cinch itself.

What about breast collars?
Breast collars are only necessary for steep trail rides or roping (but don't rope in the Fusion saddle! The horn and fork is not built for it). For the most part breast collars are too tight and
restrict the shoulders. They tend to pull the saddle forward onto the shoulders rather than allowing it to sit further back in a place more comfortable for the horse. If using a breast collar, make sure it is fitted loosely and angles along the line of the shoulder to the top of the saddle rather than straight across the front of the shoulder attaching next to the cinch. We will have matching breast collars available for the Fusion saddle beginning in July, 2005.

**Cruppers for a narrow withered horse on the trail?**
The non-slip Theraflex pad usually negates the need for cruppers.

**How is the back cinch supposed to fit?**
The back cinch should be snug, not loose. It shares the pressure so the front cinch does not need to be so tight and also prevents side to side rubbing motion of the back of the saddle.

**How can I prepare for the arrival of this saddle while I wait until Spring/Summer to get it?**
Study Fluidity! Learn about your balance point and shim your current saddle to make it less restrictive.

**What if I hate it?**
Send it right back, we have plenty of eager people on the waiting list! (Please see conditions on the agreement below.)
Over two years of development every horse loved it, moved better and more willingly. It's likely you will feel it to be different from what you are used to, but different does not mean bad. It usually means you'll need a few days to become accustomed to it. If you ride bareback and know how to find your balance point you will love what this saddle does for you!

**What is the tree made of?**
Wood with light rawhide coating. Handcrafted, of exceptional quality and uniformity.

How does the Fusion saddle compare with Tucker equitation endurance and other endurance saddles, treeless saddles, moveable tree saddles, rubber tree saddles, Australian saddles, etc? There is nothing that compares with the Fusion unless you are looking at an English saddle in which case the Balance saddle is exemplary. The designers of Balance were co-designers of the Fusion saddle. We have not yet seen another saddle, which accommodates the horse's back and shoulders in motion. Your horse will tell you / show you the difference within minutes of riding him in a Fusion saddle.

My horse has always had problems because he/she is short backed and wide/narrow? In over two years of extensive testing we have put this saddle on almost every breed and type you can imagine (except minis and full drafts!) Many horses contract their backs in defense of being ridden but once they are in the Fusion saddle with a rider who uses the concepts of Fluidity, their backs lengthen because they are able to "round up" more. These changes happen immediately but can keep evolving so it's important to check your horse's scapula range each time you saddle to ensure your stirrup is behind it's furthermore stretched position.
Long backed and wide/narrow? Long backed horses are usually displaying shoulders that are "rotated" forward. This brings both the shoulders and withers towards the neck and makes the back appear long. All horses have the same number of vertebrae in their spine. The shoulders (scapula) and withers are "floating" in muscle and are not physically attached by bone to the spine; therefore what you are seeing is a "posture", rather than a conformation issue. Horses that hold themselves naturally in short front end, long backed posture can be helped to move differently so they bring their shoulders back and learn how to round their backs and move more efficiently. But if they are ridden without Fluidity and in forward-positioned saddles that block the shoulder movement they will become progressively worse and often experience long-term difficulties such as front-end issues and sore backs.

How long are the bars? Long enough to distribute the rider's weight and make carrying them easier.... and short enough to allow latitudinal and longitudinal flexion of the spine.

What is the angle of the bars? Wide. There is more than the angle of bars in action here. The way in which the shoulders are given freedom and the rider is encouraged to sit make a major difference in how the horse is able to move. You can have wide angled bars and not change other features such as the above and still give horses problems and block their ability to move their whole body.

Click on the order form below for a printable version:

IMPORTANT: THESE FORMS MUST BE FILLED OUT AND FAXED IN, OR WE WILL NOT HAVE THE DETAILS NECESSARY TO PROCESS YOUR ORDER

The $10 (USD) brass nameplate is an option for those of you (like most of us) who would like to be able to recognize your saddle at first glance when you're among others who own fusion saddles who might have their saddles slung over adjacent fence rails or horses tied to a nearby post! (Not that you couldn't recognize your horse). It will read: Parelli Fusion Saddle custom made for ________. It's about the size of a business card, and will be screwed into the back of the cantle. It looks quite sophisticatedly simple and handsome. We are passing it along at our cost as a convenience.

Actual shipping costs will be closer to $70 to $90 (USD).