

## HOW TO IDENTIFY BALANCE SADDLES

**CURRENT MODELS** –Zenith, Felix, Matrix, Nexus, Xtreme, Equinox, Horizon and in the Junior range - Robin, Wren and Bug.

**The Model** will be stamped into the leather of the flap on each side of the saddle, just below the stirrup leather loop.



**The Style** (Dressage/GPD/GPJ/Jump) will be stamped in gold or silver foil on the buckle guards of the saddle if made by Frank Baines Saddlery...



OR...



Stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap, along with the serial number, seat size and width if made by WRM or The Saddle Company.

**The seat size and width** (in most cases – please see below) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap, along with the serial number.



#### Here's a guide to the width stamps:

- **Zenith (all styles):** 6X (narrowest), 7X, 8X and 9X (widest)
- **Felix (all styles):** 6X (narrowest), 7X, 8X and 9X (widest)
- (NB: Although the tree widths are the same on both the Zenith and Felix, the flocked panels of the Zenith are bulkier than the foam panels of the Felix saddles, so they do not sit in the same way on the horse)
- **Matrix (all styles):** Regular (narrowest) - in which case there may be NO WIDTH STAMP on the sweat flap X – meaning Xtra and XX - meaning Xtra Xtra (widest)
- **Nexus Dressage:** Regular (narrowest) – in which case there will be NO WIDTH STAMP on the sweat flap, X- meaning Xtra and XX – meaning Xtra Xtra (widest)
- **Nexus GPD, GPJ and Jump:** J1 (narrowest), J2, J3 and J4 (widest)
- **Horizon (both styles):** Apex and Arc (these are similar in width, but shaped differently to accommodate different back shapes, the Apex works better for horses with a more defined wither. The Arc works better for those who are very wide and flatter over the wither area.
- **Equinox (all styles):** #1 (narrowest), #2, #3 and #4 (widest)
- **Xtreme Dressage on Nexus Tree (XDN):** Regular (narrowest) – in which case there will be an R on the sweat flap, X- meaning Xtra and XX – meaning Xtra Xtra (widest)
- **Xtreme Dressage on the Equinox Tree (XDE):** #1 (narrowest), #2, #3 and #4 (widest)
- **Xtreme Jump on the Nexus Tree (XJN):** J1 (narrowest), J2, J3 and J4 (widest)
- **Xtreme Jump on the Equinox Tree (XJE):** #1 (narrowest), #2, #3 and #4 (widest)
- **Junior saddles (Bug, Wren and Robin, all styles):** #1 (narrowest), #2, #3 and #4 (widest)

PLEASE NOTE that if a saddle has been widened, the manufacturer stamps a '+' to indicate this, because saddles can only ever be widened by one width – it helps ensure that no-one tries to take it any wider.

#### Here's a guide to the seat size stamps:

- **Zenith, Felix, Matrix:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest).
- **Nexus Dressage and XDN:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). The Nexus rides a seat size smaller than Zenith, Felix and Matrix models.
- **Nexus Jump:** A (smallest), B, C, D and E (largest). Rides similar to saddles 2.
- **XJN:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). Rides similar to saddles 1.
- **Horizon:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). Rides similar to saddles 1.
- **\*Equinox, and XDE:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). Rides similar to saddles 2.
- **Robin:** 16 ½" and 17"
- **Wren:** 15" and 16"
- **Bug:** 12", 13" and 14"

\* **The Equinox GPD and GPJ saddles have 2 cantle options.** A standard cantle is referred to as a 2/1 and a longer, sloping cantle which is a 2/2

**Seat Length information continued:** \* Please note that the traditional way of referring to seat length is not used in most of our saddles. This is because firstly, the BALANCE saddles feel different to ride in, so to do so could mislead and confuse people. The traditional way to measure the length of your saddle would be to stretch a tape measure from the centre of the head nail to the centre of the cantle. This will give you a measurement in inches, but because the BALANCE trees differ from traditional saddle trees in order to accommodate the width and shape of a healthy equine back when moving in a bio-mechanically correct way, they 'feel' smaller to the rider than they measure. Secondly, the conventional saddle industry uses inches to define lengths and this definition is what and often leads riders to think they need, say, a 17" seat in any make or style of saddle simply because they currently ride in a 17" saddle and find it comfortable. In actual fact, the style of saddle, activity you want the saddle for, horse's back length etc. all pose significant factors that should be considered before choosing a seat length.

**Determining the age of a saddle:** The serial numbers may tell you roughly when the saddle was *made*. However, there are saddles that were in one year, but then held in stock for some time before being sold, so the serial number is NOT a totally reliable guide as to how much use a saddle has had since originally purchased.

WE NO LONGER HAVE THE MANPOWER TO CHECK THE DATES THAT SADDLES WERE SOLD, so please DO NOT email the office asking for that information. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

## IDENTIFYING OLDER & DISCONTINUED MODELS:

### Saddles made by Frank Baines Saddlery for BALANCE

**The Original BALANCE saddles made before the Zenith etc. name applied.**

#### **Made by Frank Baines Saddlery.**

Un-named, but often referred to as 'Pre-Zenith' BALANCE saddles.

**The Model:** Please refer to picture above to help you to identify this saddle. They are very similar to the Zenith saddles to look at but will NOT have the model stamped anywhere on them.

**The Style:** (Dressage/Capriole/GPD/GPJ/Jump or Event) will be stamped on the buckle guards.

**The seat size and width:** (please see below) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap, along with the serial number:

**Seat sizes:** 17", 17½", 18" and 18½" **OR** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest).

**Widths:** 1X, 2X, 3X, 4X, 5X, 6X,



## Saddles made by Horse Products International for BALANCE

**Also referred to as Hamilton/BALANCE saddles.**

**The original Model:** Please refer to picture to help you to identify this saddle. They have flocked panels but will NOT have the model stamped anywhere on them.

**The Style:** (Dressage/GPD/GPJ) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap.

**The seat size and possibly the width:** (please see below) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap,

**Seat sizes:** 17", 17½", 18" and 18½".

**Widths:** 1X, 2X, 3X, 4X, 5X, 6X and 7X. These saddles fitted wider than the original Frank Baines models because the front of the tree had more of a open head shape (flared) although the point to point measurements were similar.



### The Free Spirit Saddles.



**The model:** Please refer to picture above to help you to identify this saddle. They do not have the model stamped anywhere on them.

**The Style:** (Dressage/GPD/GPJ/J) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap.

**The seat size and possibly the width:** (please see below) will be stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap

**Seat sizes:** 17", 17½", 18" and 18½" **OR** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). If the letters are used, they will be stamped as such:

**Widths:** Regular (narrowest) – in which case there will be NO WIDTH STAMP on the sweat flap and X- meaning Xtra (widest)





## Soft Option Saddles

The very original Soft Options were made with wool felt panels on a specially made, steel half tree. They all have a large crosshead bolt at the front instead of the usual blue BALANCE nail.



They were always sold with a Pro-Complete Base Pad in the ½ inch version because the felt panels are very shallow and more depth, cushioning is needed than the panels provide on their own.

The next generation of Soft Option were made on the same tree for the widest version (ARK) also identified with the Cross-Head bolt at the front, but also included an alternative width using a laminated beech plus steel half tree which was called the Apex. These saddles were made with the BALANCE Head Nail at the front.

These saddles were also made with a deeper panel design made up of Felts and foam covered in leather. (see the pictures below)



GPD



DRESSAGE



Width Stamp

**The Style:** (Dressage or GPD) will be stamped on the buckle guards.

**The seat size and possibly the width:** (please see below).

**Seat sizes:** A (smallest), B, C and D (largest), be stamped as such:

**Widths:** The Apex is slightly narrower and shaped to sit higher over the wither. It has the BALANCE blue nail on the front of it. The Arc is slightly wider and is flatter over in the pommel for horses with no/low withers. It has a large crosshead bolt at the front instead of the usual blue BALANCE nail.

## Saddles made by The Saddle Company for BALANCE

### The Kestrel



*Kestrel GPJ*



*Kestrel GPD*

**The Model:** The Kestrel was a semi-synthetic saddle (the underside of the sweat flaps and skirts were synthetic) built on the Equinox tree. Some sold within the UK had serge panels, but those sent outside the UK all had leather panels. All Kestrels were identified by the name stamped into the stirrup leather keeper as shown here (right).



**The Style:** Kestrels were only available in GPD or GPJ styles. The style will be stamped on the nearside sweat flap as shown here (left) along with the width, saddle length and serial number.

**The seat size and width:** as mentioned, stamped into the leather on the back edge of the nearside sweat flap (see left).

**Seat sizes:** (the same as Equinox & XDE) - A (smallest), B, C and D (largest). Rides similar to saddles Nexus.

**Widths:** (all styles): #1 (narrowest), #2, #3 and #4 (widest)

## Saddles made by Walsall Riding for BALANCE

### The BALANCE Western Style Saddles



*The Montana (with a horn)*



*The Savanna/Hybrid/Trail (without a horn)*

**The Model:** The BALANCE Western Style saddles were English saddles in disguise! All the same horse-friendly design features on the horse's side as an English BALANCE saddle, with the look of a Western saddle on the rider's side. They were built on a reinforced Equinox tree.



*Close-up of the Montana horn*



**The Style:** There were only two styles identified by: Montana - with the horn, and Savanna/Hybrid/Trail – without a horn

**The seat size and width:**

**Seat sizes:** B (smallest) C and D (largest)

**Widths:** Western style: #2 (narrowest) and #3 (widest)