

# EQUINE SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL

## PROPER COLLECTION IS *THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS*

### PART 1

BY CARLIJN PONTENAGEL



IN THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE, WE TALKED ABOUT STRAIGHTNESS, TEMPO AND POSTURE CONTROL. IS YOUR HORSE NOT SLOWING DOWN OR SPEEDING UP WHEN YOU AREN'T GIVING HIM AN AID? CAN YOU RIDE YOUR HORSE IN ANY POSITION AND FRAME THAT YOU WANT WITHOUT HIM GETTING STRAINED OR TIGHT? THEN YOU AND YOUR HORSE ARE READY FOR THE NEXT STEP,

COLLECTION!



WHAT IS COLLECTION?

We all seem to agree that training must first and foremost contribute to the physical development of the horse. Ultimate collection not only asks for a great deal of straightness, flexibility and coordination. It also asks for tremendous **mental concentration** and contribution of your horse.

Very briefly, in collection you want the horse to shift his weight, which means that the energy you put in is not going forward but more upwards. You want the horse to put more pressure on the hind legs and lift his front.

Roughly, we can distinguish three stages of collection

The **natural balance** of the horse, which refers to 3/5 of the horse's weight, is on the front legs and 2/5 of the weight is on the hind legs. When the horse carries a rider, there is even more weight on the forelegs. In the beginning, when breaking a horse, this is how the weight is distributed.

In the **second stage**, the horse has equal weight distribution; its weight is evenly divided on four legs. This is referred to as horizontal balance.

It is up to the rider to train the horse and to encourage the horse to distribute the weight better and eventually move the gravity to the rear. **This last stage** is called the ultimate collection.

DURATION OF THE SCHOOLING CAREER

Each horse has a different conformation and nature, so the following is not a golden rule, but more a guideline to make you realize that **it takes a lot of time, sweat and tears** before you and your horse are advanced.

Ultimate collection comes at the end of a long schooling career, after the horse has done the necessary bodybuilding and is able to respond correctly to all

the aids.

Both mentally and physically the horse needs to be prepared and ready to show the ultimate collection. In the beginning, a stride or four might be enough for your horse.

In order to achieve collection many muscles need to become stronger. The horse has to be able to shift the center of gravity towards his hind legs. By doing this, the angle in the hocks and knee joints increases. Therefore, the horse lowers his hindquarters, strides get more elevated and the movement gets more 'upwards' than 'forward'. This is often referred to as "the horse shortens his frame and moves more uphill". You can always keep in mind that the horse needs to become 'shorter' in the part behind the

saddle and not be cranked in a short head position.

Unfortunately, there are no shortcuts. Many horses need four to five years of training to become skilled and able to really handle both mentally as physically the ultimate form of collection.

Besides, not all horses have the mental and/or physical talent to accomplish top level in whatever discipline.

Keep in mind that **there is always room for improvement**, both towards collection and in collection work. Different horses take more or less time to get ready to start playing with collection work.

It might be of help to train according to the "Scala der Ausbildung". This training schedule gives you methodical support over a longer period of time.

