



HOW TO BE A TRAINER (Part 11)

DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 1)

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IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT SOME SHOW JUMPING RIDERS CONSIDER DRESSAGE AS UNNATURAL! THEY TALK ABOUT IT –AS IF IT WERE SOME FORM OF FOREIGN RIDING AND NOT REALLY NECESSARY FOR SCHOOLING SHOW JUMPING HORSES.

THE AIM:

The aim of jumping-dressage is to school and improve show jumping horses through systematic training on the flat. Dressage enhances not only the horse's strength, but also his gracefulness of movement aiming to train both the mind and the body of the horse so that he and the rider can achieve their long term goals in any equestrian sport.

BENEFITS:

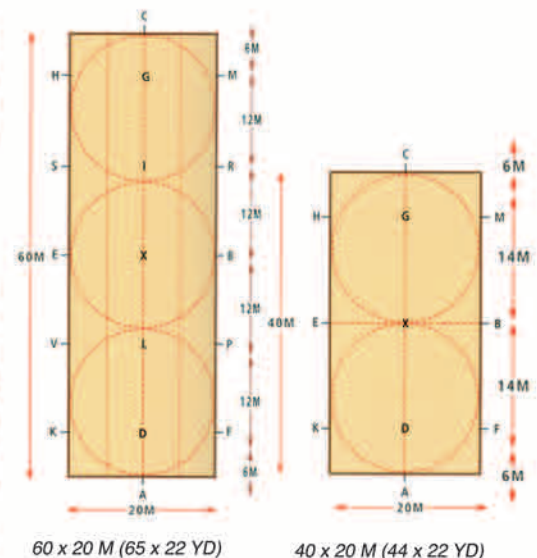
Jumping-dressage is a long series of progressive exercises which develop the horse's movements, obedience, balance and jumping ability to the utmost degree. It is pleasant for a rider to jump such a horse as it will respond quickly to the rider's aids. For these reasons a show jumping rider should not overlook this article by telling himself that he knows all about dressage and sticks to reading only about jumping.

DIFFERENCE:

Jumping-dressage is not quite the same as dressage tests, however it involves the same principles. In classic dressage, the impulsion is used as a propulsive force in forward direction, while in jumping-dressage it is used to propel the horse not only forward, but also **upward**. A show jumper needs complete freedom of head and neck to be able to bascule over large obstacles. A show jumper must also be able to change fluently from a high degree of collection to an elastic degree of expansion in order to cope with spread fences. It must respond to the minimal use of aids in turning quickly and smoothly, along with having enough initiative and **heart** to attempt all obstacles. Therefore, dressage for a jumper cannot be the same as for a high level of a dressage horse.

THE ARENA:

There are two different sizes of dressage arenas (20 x 40m and 20 x 60m). Alphabetical markers are placed about 50cm outside the arena to guide the riders through their movements. The line between A and C is called the centre-line, while the line from B to E is the half-way line. The lines half-way between the long side and the centre-line are called the $\frac{1}{4}$ lines. When riding alongside the board, you are said to be riding on the outside track; but when riding two to three meters in from the boards, you are said to be riding on the inside track. These terms and definitions are very important for the trainer and rider to know as to always be able to speak the same language.



Two Dressage Arenas: The 60 x 20m arena is the standard shape for higher level tests; the 40 x 20m arena is used for lower levels.

NATURAL BALANCE:

Grave mistakes can be made in schooling horses if one is uncertain about the natural balance of the horse in motion and in jumping. By nature

every young horse moves in balance. From the first weeks of his life, he continues in the field without losing his balance or stumbling. Nevertheless, during the first few months of riding, the young horse with a rider on his back has great difficulties in maintaining his balance due to the additional force of gravity of the rider's weight.

BALANCE DIFFICULTIES:

To appreciate how difficult it is for a young horse to re-establish his natural balance while carrying the burden of a rider, imagine a burden on one's own back. One automatically places the burden above one's own centre of gravity, which is between the shoulders; this is the easiest way to carry it. One reacts the same way as does a young horse trying to rebalance himself. One rounds his back and pushes the head and neck downward and forward. The weight would be twice as heavy if carried lower down on a hollow back. When the rider distributes his weight closer to the withers, he makes it easier and more comfortable for the horse to carry it. This gives the horse the chance to **round** his back and bring his hind-legs **underneath**. Both are very important for a show jumper to propel himself forward and upward.

EARLY SCHOOLING:

In the early stages of schooling, the young horse should therefore never be ridden "on the bit", but only on a loose or long rein, held finger tight. Only then the horse has the opportunity to regain his natural balance carrying a rider because he can move with a low head and neck carriage. This enables him, at this stage of schooling, to use his back and quarters freely. It is also very regrettable to see many horses not being given the time to first develop their muscles and balance before being pushed onto the bit and asked to move in a collected manner. Once the horse has re-established his natural balance on level ground, it could be ridden in a hilly terrain in a forward seat on a loose rein. This is excellent pre-training for the balance



Fig.1



Fig.3



Fig.2



Fig.4

Fig 1: Carrying weight easily & in balance above one's own centre of gravity

Fig 2: The weight is twice as heavy when carried lower down with a hollow back

Fig 3: Compare the weight carrying man with a horse, who carries his rider in balance above his centre of gravity

Fig 4: Compare the weight carrying man with a horse, whose rider throws his weight into the back of the saddle. The horse will drop his back & feel the weight twice as heavy

of a future show jumper. The horse relates his paces to the centre of gravity of the rider. That is why it is absolutely necessary that the rider on a young horse sits as still as possible.

STAGES OF SCHOOLING:

The progressive schooling programme, designed to achieve **collection** at the end, has to be followed step by step (never skip a stage).

Phase 1: showing the horse the way to the ground (relaxation and balance)

in all three paces, on a loose rein, maintaining impulsion.

Phase 2: engaging the inner hind-leg without lateral bending, making transitions along with the kicking board.

Phase 3: moving the quarters away from the track, lateral bending, activating the inner hind-leg (later the turn on the forehand).

Phase 4: turning on the haunches, depending on the standard of the

horse's schooling, it can be either a quarter or a half-turn.


Phase 5: riding the horse **on the bit** with collection; at first in walk then at trot and canter, increasing demands gradually. Always remember that it is sometimes quite wise to go back one phase but never skip one forward.

RIDING AIDS:

Going back a few issues of Horse Times, it was mentioned that the most developed part of the horse's brain is the memory. That's why applying different riding aids, according to the stage of schooling, should be adjusted

in proper timing, amount and clearance. We have natural and artificial riding aids; natural ones are: weight (seat), leg, and rein aids, while artificial ones comprise of voice (not considered natural in my opinion), whip, spurs, and other artificial equipments (draw reins, chambon, etc.)

The rider's weight shifting to the right or left will cause the horse to turn right or left. The rider's centre of gravity should always be in harmony with the horse's centre of gravity. The rider's leg must hang close to the horse's sides, in touch, feeling but not gripping, forcing or flapping against

the horse's sides. There are two types of leg aids: the forward driving (just behind the girth), and the sideways (guarding) which is applied further behind the girth. The hands of the rider should keep an even, elastic contact with the horse's mouth. We have different types of rein aids: receiving, yielding, non-allowing, restraining and open. Every non-allowing or restricting rein aid must be followed by a slightly yielding rein aid. To turn or to keep a young horse straight, we use the open rein aid, indicating the direction. Always put in mind that our goal is always the best performance with the minimal aids; think simple but efficient. 



Here, the 2002 World Champion Germany's Nadine Capellman, is asking her horse *Farbenfroh* to go sideways with her outside leg, while asking him to go forwards with her inside leg. Her inside rein controls bend & the outside rein controls speed