



# The Contact

Keeping Members Informed

Nebraska Dressage Association - <http://www.nebraskadressage.org/> - July/August 2013 Edition

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## The Thoughtful Rider

### The Walk: A Clear Indicator of Your Training Progress

*By Hector Carmona, Jr.*

In training we must strive that we are finishing our rides with a content and fresh horse. Which means we need to allow the free walk during breaks be a clear indicator of how the training is progressing. Straightness and long, relaxed, full ground covering strides become a byproduct of quality training that can be influenced with minimal effort from the rider. If this is lacking its vitally important that the training is with those ideals as a goal. Until this becomes clearer I find it best and more suitable to hand walk as a cool down after the ride instead of either a plodding or rider involved walk. Ultimately it leads to horse pleased in its effort with the rider on its back during the cool down phase.

## Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars

Summer Solstice Schooling Show	July 13-14	S & L Stables, Bennett, NE
KCDS Summer Dressage Schooling Show	July 19	Longview Horse Park, Kansas City, MO
KCDS Summer Dressage I & II	July 20-21	Longview Horse Park, Kansas City, MO
Providence Farm Schooling Show	July 27	Providence Farm, Palmyra, NE
Lancaster County Fair Open Dressage Show	August 4-5	Lancaster Event Center, Lincoln, NE
Cornhusker Classic Schooling Show Championships	September 7	Lancaster Event Center, Lincoln, NE
Region 4 Championships	October 10-13	National Equestrian Center, St. Louis, MO
Nebraska Horse Expo	November 15-17	Lancaster Event Center, Lincoln, NE

**At each stage of work, the horse must be taken to his limit, but never over.**

*Walter Zettl*

## The EASY Button for Success

*Jody Brott, Dressage with Dignity*



Lauren Barwick, current 4 Star Parelli Professional and member of the Canadian Para Olympic Team related her journey with Parelli to the Easy Button Staples Commercial. Parelli has helped her find the EASY button with her horses. In addition to being the current spokesperson for Parelli, Lauren has experienced a few lifetimes of opportunities and challenges some of which she shared with me during the 2013 Dressage Summit.

Lauren began our interview by stating, "I am Competitive; I love horses and got into them because I love them." She continued sharing that she wanted more...to be the Best Me she could be...Emotionally, Mentally and Physically. Lauren is constantly exploring how/what she can do so that her horse willingly wants to go above and beyond for her in their Partnership. Parelli Natural Horsemanship has helped Lauren reach the NEXT Level of Communication with her horse."



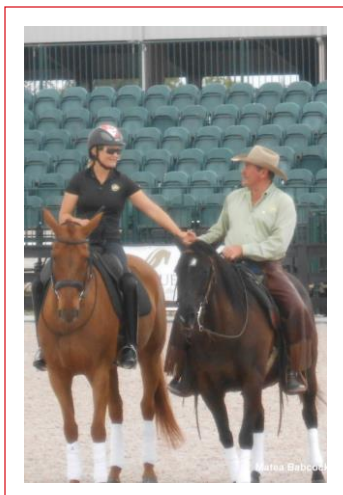
In 2004 Lauren competed in the Para Olympics at Athens, Greece. She shared that she had a 'made' horse, she rode it, they did it and they received a Silver Medal that year. Preparing for Beijing Lauren's Dressage Partner, Paris, had Classical Dressage Training, but, she had some Foundation Holes they needed to work on. To improve her Dressage Partner she needed to work on building a better foundation, she had the Icing without the Cake. They did receive a Gold Medal in Beijing. If you have time to visit with Lauren, ask her to share her journey to Beijing with you. It was an amazing adventure.



Lauren's journey with Paris has been and continues to be to bake the Cake. In 2012 Paris and Lauren placed 6th at the London Para Olympics. Lauren lit up as she described the joy she experienced at the difference in Paris at London. When Paris and Lauren get to the podium she knows it will be the most rewarding experience because they will have come through the good and the bad together as a team with their Dignity intact and they will have earned it TOGETHER. Paris has heart and try, now they are striving to refine their communication skills.

As a 4 Star Parelli Professional, Lauren strives for never ending self-improvement daily. Some of the ideas Lauren takes time to evaluate daily include:

- Am I forcing my horse OR am I providing help for my horse to perform the tasks I ask? Am I preparing & planning for tomorrow?
- Am I emotional and doing things out of ego OR out of love and understanding for my horse?



Ashley Gowanlock, from Vancouver, Canada, has been Lauren's teammate and roommate for Canada's Para-Equestrian Team over the years. Ashley shared an interesting tidbit about Beijing. After the compulsory phase of the Dressage tests, Lauren stated that she was going to withdraw from the Freestyle as she did not feel that she was performing her best. Ashley was shocked and replied, "Why don't you just go out and have fun?" Lauren has mentioned many times over the years how Ashley's comment impacted her to compete in the Freestyle as Ashley helped her remember it was supposed to be fun for her and her partner. The Gold Medal Lauren and her partner achieved in Beijing is History. Thanks to Ashley's encouragement at the right moment.

Ashley was born with Cerebral Palsy and her Physical Therapist recommended horses to help when she was two years old because the movement of the horse would help with stretching and strengthening the muscles for walking. When Ashley was 14-15 she participated in a Developing Young Rider Clinic for Team Canada, where she decided that if she could travel round the world riding horses (her favorite thing to do) she would try it out. She loves the idea of connecting with her horse. If you can become a partner and be on the same team moving forward together as a team, that's Ashley's idea of Freedom, Harmony, Balance and Truth.

Francis Elliott another Para-equestrian athlete from Canada came to the Dressage Symposium because of the Parelli Natural Horsemanship Program. Francis has Cerebral Palsy and growing up horses became her best friends. Because of horses, she walks and has had many great opportunities. When Francis was younger she played with her horses and had fun.

Because she wanted to get back to what she had as a youngster, Francis came to the Parelli Dressage Summit. Pat

and Linda Parelli have inspired her and helped her realize the Partnership with her horses again. Because Francis is passionate about being the very best that she can be, this Historical Event could not be missed. For three days she was able to immerse herself in education from International Dressage Masters who she would never be able to travel to on her own.

Jody Schloss began her Parelli journey in 2010 when Lauren asked Jody to join her and train at the Parelli Ranch in Florida. At the time Jody was ranked fairly low on Team Canada's Para-equestrian list mostly because her horse was a quarter horse with a short stride. Jody met Lauren at her first International Competition. From there Jody went to the World Equestrian Games as a spectator where Lauren invited her to Ocala, Florida. Jody hadn't heard about Parelli so Lauren introduced her and that year was a complete turnaround for Jody. Lauren also got Jody involved in the Fast Track and she fell in love with the Parelli program. Lauren tried many horses for herself and found one that was perfect for Jody. While Jody was in Florida working with Lauren, she participated in many competitions on her horses and ended up being ranked 4th in Canada. Parelli helped Jody change her world.

It was a tremendous tribute to the Parelli Program when Team Canada's Para-Equestrian Dressage Team composed of Lauren Barwick, Jody Schloss, Ashley Gowanlock and Lynne Poole won the Team Competition at the Adequan Global Dressage Festival WEF Dressage Classic CPED13 during March of this year. They placed more than 25% above the second place United States Para-Equestrian Dressage Team. In addition to winning the Team Competition, the Canadians won 10 of the 15 classes offered. I cannot express the great privilege and honor it was for me to be able to sit and visit with three of the members of this Canadian Para-Equestrian Dressage Team during the Dressage Summit. Thanks to Lauren, Ashley and Jody for sharing your time, thoughts and talent with me during the Dressage Summit.



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## Historic Native Horse Facing Immediate Threat

Press Release – April 30, 2013 – Contact Shelly Hauge at (701) 254-4205 – [info@nokotahorse.org](mailto:info@nokotahorse.org)

On the high plains of North Dakota there exists a band of horses unlike any other in America. They are the Nokota, descendants of horses bred by the Sioux in the 1800s and used by turn of the century ranchers in the badlands. This bit of living history in the form of nearly 500 wild and semi-wild Nokota horses located near Linton, North Dakota are in trouble. They don't have enough hay to see them through to summer.

A combination of greatly reduced donations to the non-profit Nokota Horse Conservancy and poor weather conditions during the hay growing season last year have caused hay supplies to dip so low that the Conservancy has a little over a week's worth of hay left. Consequently, the horses are facing an uncertain and precarious future. The herd may even have to be dispersed. If so, there is no guarantee that all can be safely re-homed, and losing so much of the gene pool would seriously jeopardize the continued preservation of this historic horse.

As founders of the non-profit Nokota Horse Conservancy, brothers Leo and Frank Kuntz, along with Frank's wife Shelly and a small group of volunteers have spent the last 30 years trying to save and preserve these native horses. Along with caring for the physical needs of many Nokota horses, they are also careful custodians of the lineage,

which combines the genetics of the horses surrendered by Sitting Bull at Fort Buford in 1881 and range stock from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. The Conservancy owns 118 horses, representing the rarest of these old bloodlines. In their private herds, Frank and Leo each own approximately 175 additional horses. All three herds are endangered.

Speaking of this critical threat facing the horses of the Conservancy, Frank Kuntz said "These horses are wonderful, living representatives of a history that has often been tragic. They deserve the right to have a future."

More information about the Nokota horse, their history, and their current plight can be found on the Nokota Conservancy website [www.nokotahorse.org/cms/](http://www.nokotahorse.org/cms/).



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# The Dressage Foundation's *Century Club*

## *Honoring Senior Dressage Riders and Horses*

THE CENTURY CLUB was formed at The Dressage Foundation in 1996, at the suggestion of noted dressage judge and instructor, Dr. Max Gahwyler (CT). The Century Club recognizes dressage riders and horses whose combined age totals 100 years or more. Horse and rider perform a dressage test of any level at a show or event, and are scored by a dressage judge or professional.

**The intent of the Century Club is to encourage senior dressage riders to remain active in the sport. Since its formation, the Century Club has grown into a meaningful and popular endeavor for equestrians across the country. This is a wonderful group, not only experienced in horsemanship, but in various and unique life experiences.**

The Dressage Foundation is very proud of each Century Club Team and is pleased to present a ribbon and plaque to each new member.

Riders interested in joining the Century Club should submit an application to The Dressage Foundation prior to the ride. The Century Club application can be found at [www.DressageFoundation.org](http://www.DressageFoundation.org), or contact Jenny Johnson, Administrative Director, at (402) 434-8585.



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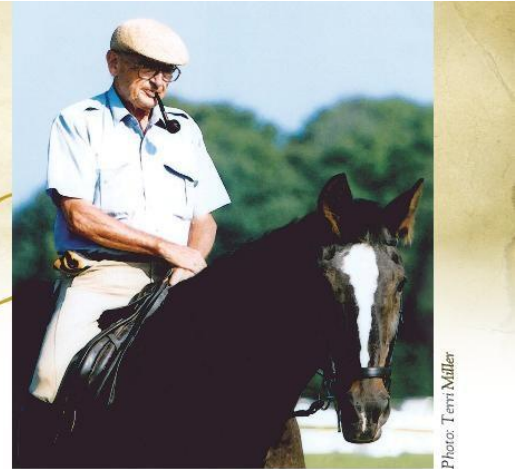


Photo: Terri Miller

Max Gahwyler and Prinz Eugen (CT) - Team #2



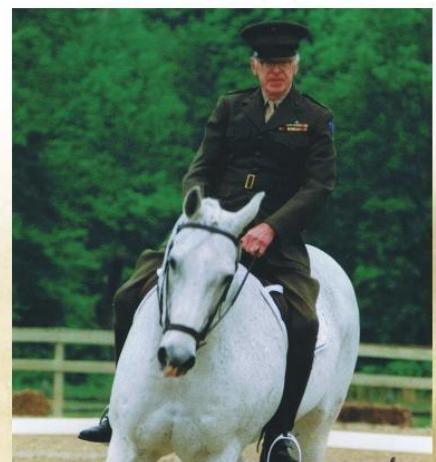
Carole Nuckton and Zeb (OR) - Team #52



Photo: Ayala Perita

Marion Julier and Schaeferin (MD) - Team #108

Charles Chapin and Zeus (IL) - Team #11



## Bridging the Gap

### *A look at the new USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program*

*By Kristi Wysocki*

The exciting new USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program, presented by Dressage at Devon, a USDF education partner, is designed for three-year-old sport horses, with a focus on dressage.

The purpose of this program is to fill the void between the current USDF program for sport-horse prospects and the US Equestrian Federation's Young Horse program. Both programs include an avenue for competition; but more important, both have strong educational programs to provide consistent, correct fundamentals for these horses (and their owners and trainers). Historically there was no system to bridge the gap between the two programs. The USDF Sport Horse Committee has worked hard to design the **Sport Horse Prospect Development Program** as a dynamic solution to this problem.

#### EACH SIDE OF THE GAP: THE CURRENT PROGRAMS

The current **USDF sport-horse program** constitutes a mix of education and competition opportunities: handlers' clinics, sport-horse seminars, and the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Breeders' Championship Series.

Handlers' clinics address basic preparations for horses to be shown in hand, show-ring rules, and safe and correct handling procedures. Sport-horse seminars are designed to educate breeders, riders, trainers, and potential owners about the qualities to look for in sport-horse prospects and breeding stock, and how to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The Great American/USDF Breeders' Championship Series is a national championship program that includes dressage sport-horse prospect, breeding stock, group, and Materiale/under-saddle classes.

The **United States Equestrian Federation Young Horse program** comprises training programs for four-, five-, and six-year-olds and the Markel/USEF National Young Horse Dressage Championships, for horses in this same age group. The training sessions promote the importance of selective breeding and correct training of horses in the US. Breeders, owners, riders, and trainers of young horses are encouraged to participate. The Young Horse Championships identify and recognize

*Article continues on next page*



outstanding talent and training of international-caliber young horses. The entire program is intended to prepare these horses for future careers at the FEI levels and participation on US high-performance teams.

### UNDER CONSTRUCTION: BUILDING THE BRIDGE

The USDF Sport Horse Prospect Development Program is designed to provide a means of transition from the USDF sport-horse program to the USEF Young Horse program.

As Scott Hassler, one of the major architects of the new program, has stated, "This new program, which is focused on three-year-olds, is a platform to reach the breeders in the United States. Nobody in this country reaches out to the breeder consistently. This program will give them something more - give them a path to take their youngsters from in-hand as a baby by its mother's side to a successful first year under saddle, moving through USDF Materiale classes and then on to the USEF high-performance classes. The US has never had a complete route for the breeder to take their young horses to successful riding careers - until now."

### BUILD IT AND THEY SHALL COME: THE INTENDED AUDIENCE

The Sport Horse Prospect Development Program is designed for USDF members and nonmembers alike. A major goal is to reach trainers nationwide, to help develop a more consistent and successful training foundation for sport-horse prospects. Previously, there were no educational programs aimed at trainers that spell out the correct steps in taking the youngster from handling to early under-saddle training. The new USDF program will provide that foundation.

The USDF Sport Horse Committee also believes that this program will provide a way for US breeders to become more involved in the system. Typically, American breeders fade out of the picture fairly early in a horse's career. They can get good exposure via the USDF Breeders' Championship Series, but after that they tend to get lost in the system. The Sport

Horse Prospect Development Program will invite breeders to remain more involved and visible beyond the three-year-old stage. It will provide them a resource to correctly start their young prospects, thus enhancing their horses' chances of a successful future under saddle.

The program will also serve as a resource for US breeders and owners to find and evaluate trainers for their young stock. For those breeders who already employ young-horse trainers, the program will provide opportunities for those trainers to further their knowledge and skills. Individual and prospective owners, who may have fewer resources for finding trainers with the skills to start young horses under saddle, will be able to network with trainers and to learn what's required at this stage of training.

Finally, the program will provide a means for budding equine stars to be discovered at the beginning of their under-saddle years, thus helping talented sport-horse prospects to "get on the radar" at a much earlier age. This should benefit both the

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horses and the USEF Young Horse program by helping horses and trainers get off to the best start possible, thereby increasing their chances of success in the USEF Young Horse program later on. However, the program is ultimately designed to help all three-year-olds get started correctly, not just the superstars. The program’s primary purpose is to demonstrate and teach fundamental techniques for starting the sport-horse prospect, no matter where his talent lies.

**CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS: PROGRAM DETAILS**

The Sport Horse Prospect Development Program will feature interactive forums on subjects including basic equine management, evaluation of the horse’s mental and physical development, and assessment of his character (temperament). Presenters will teach how to handle the youngster correctly to ensure good ground manners. Basic lunging techniques and long-lining will also be addressed. Audiences will watch demonstrations of safe and correct backing techniques, followed by the progression of early training under saddle. The characteristics and skills needed in an effective rider/trainer at this stage will also be discussed. Each forum will also include a discussion of

the development, abilities, and temperaments of sport-horse prospects that would best suit individuals and potential owners if they invest in a prospect for themselves.

Approximately eight to ten horses will be included in each forum. Participants will have the opportunity to work with the world’s top experts in young-horse training: individually and then by observing the other sessions.

**PROJECT SUPPORT: THE RIBBON CUTTERS**

Dressage at Devon (PA) has joined USDF as an education partner to help get the Sport Horse Prospect Development Program off the ground. According to DAD president Lori Kaminski, “Dressage at Devon is proud to be a part of this exciting new program. This is a great way for us to give back to those who have supported our show for so many years and to fulfill our primary mission of education.”

The inaugural forum, to be held September 14-15 at Apple Knoll Farm in Millis, MA, is supported by Hassler

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dressage and hosted by the New England Dressage Association. The instructors will be Ingo Pape, a renowned German Hanoverian breeder and trainer, and Scott Hassler. Both men have an expansive knowledge of dressage sport horses, from the breeding stage to the FEI competition ring.

For more information on this new program or to attend the forum as a participant or auditor, visit the USDF website or send an email to [shprospect@usdf.org](mailto:shprospect@usdf.org).

*Kristi Wysocki is the chair of the USDF Sport Horse Committee and of the USEF Dressage Committee Sport Horse Sub-committee. She is a USEF "S" dressage judge and an "R" dressage sport-horse judge. She also serves on the USDF Sport Horse Seminar faculty. She and her husband own and run Somewhere Farms in Elbert, CO.*

This article was first published in *Dressage Connection* June 2013 issue.

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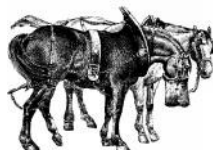
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## It's Time for Serious and Significant Change

By Geoff Teall

In this age of instant information via the Internet, social media and newspapers, every part of our sport is under constant scrutiny. Anything we're doing to our horses is being watched, reported and talked about. If what we're doing is not in the best interest of our horses, you can be sure it's being watched and discussed, as it should be.

So it's important that we address any negative issues within our sport ourselves. If we don't regulate ourselves, somebody else is going to do that for us. There are certainly other horse sports that have not regulated themselves well and as a result are now facing regulation by different state and even national government agencies.

The most important issues facing the horse show industry today are the doping of horses (the use of prohibited drugs or illegal substances) and the mismanagement of beneficial and therapeutic medications. What's happening out there is not only detrimental to our horses but in some cases has even led to equine fatalities. This, in turn, is hurting our sport.

Because of the importance of this issue, when I was asked to be part of a special task force for the U.S. Equestrian Federation to look into the collapses and deaths of our animals related to doping, I agreed to serve. Consequently I was asked, and agreed, to also serve on the USEF Drugs and Medications Committee. I was very interested in finding out as much as I could about this issue from the people I felt were best able to give me the correct information.

The task force is made up of people who represent many different views on the subject. From the veterinary field we have Stephen Schumacher, DVM, and Kent Allen, DVM. From the USEF we have President Chrystine Tauber and CEO John Long as well as the USEF's legal counsel, Sonja Keating.

Add to that mix U.S. Hunter Jumper Association President Bill Moroney and other respected colleagues of mine from the field, including Karen Healey, Max Amaya, Shelley Campf, Jeff Campf and Mary Babick, and you have a very complete and informed group of

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# Dreizler Family, Spanish Riding School Create New Grant Fund at The Dressage Foundation

The Heldenberg Training Center Fund has been established in memory of E.L. Dreizler by Ralph and Freddie Dreizler in conjunction with the Dreizler family. This Fund will provide grants to non-professional North American riders for theoretical study and/or training with an owned, borrowed or leased horse at the Heldenberg Training Center (the Spanish Riding School will not provide horses). Initial grants will cover the tuition costs of attending the Spanish Riding School's Training Center.

As the grant fund grows, future grants may also cover all or a portion of the transportation, lodging and related expenses for up to two months of training.



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Grant applications are due at the Foundation office by July 1, 2013, and recipients will have up to two years to use the funds.

Application forms and instructions are available at [www.DressageFoundation.org](http://www.DressageFoundation.org) or by calling The Dressage Foundation office at (402) 434-8585.



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people. In any meetings we've had, each and every one of us has had a different and valuable viewpoint to bring to the table.

### THE DISCONCERTING TRUTH

I've learned through this process that there's much more science behind the USEF Rules and Regulations than I realized. More importantly, this science is in most cases very different than what the average horseperson believes to be true.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners created "Clinical Guidelines for Veterinarians Treating the Non-Racing Performance Horse," an incredibly concise, thoughtful paper that speaks to almost all issues pertaining to the therapeutic medication and treatment of the show horse today. In this publication a group of our best veterinarians make recommendations on how to use common beneficial medications and other therapeutic treatments with the best interests of our horses in mind.

It was disconcerting to me to learn how, in many cases, we're inadvertently injuring our horses in the long term by

the way we're using certain therapeutic medications. It was also interesting how many misconceptions we have about how these beneficial medications and treatments actually work and the best time frames in which to use them to get the best therapeutic result for our horses.

In an effort to start the self-regulating process the USEF is going to bring forward new rule changes and changes in policy, all related to the therapeutic medication and treatment of horses as well as the illegal doping of horses. These changes are based on the long-term welfare of our horses. They are also based on science, not myth. The USEF has closely followed the recommendations made by the AAEP. A lot of time, effort and thought have been put into the changes coming forward.

The first rule change the USEF will be considering, in its simplest form, is to restrict any injection from being given to a horse less than 12 hours prior to competition. There will be three exceptions that will be allowed only for therapeutic reasons, to be given by a licensed veterinarian only within six hours of competition. A USEF Medication Report will have to be filed in these cases.

The purpose behind this proposed rule change is to put an end to the dangerous and illegal drugs that are being administered by injection very close to the time of competition. In addition, it will bring the administration of therapeutic drugs in line with the recommendations of the AAEP and the companies that manufacture these beneficial drugs.

The second major rule change the USEF will be considering, again in its very simplest form, will be to require any owner, rider, or trainer to report any collapse of a horse under their care at a USEF competition to the USEF steward within one hour. The main purpose behind this rule change would be to make sure that the USEF is aware of any collapses at one of their shows and therefore be able to immediately investigate any situations that may require it. Again, the underlying focus on this change is the welfare of the horse.

### STIFFER PENALTIES

In addition to these proposed rule changes the USEF is also planning on making changes to their



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drug-testing protocol and to the handling of drug-related infractions. There will be an increase in drug testing at all horse shows, and the testing will target the major competitions, in particular the winners and top-placed horses.

Random testing will still occur, and any horse entered at any USEF-licensed competition may be tested. If you're using permitted medications incorrectly or are administering illegal or prohibited substances, chances are much greater now that you will get caught.

The USEF is also looking into the penalties assigned to members who violate the rules, with a range of penalties to match the severity of the infraction. A slight overage of a permitted therapeutic medication will more than likely get a lesser penalty, while the use of a forbidden or illegal substance will sustain the highest penalty. Larger fines and suspensions much longer than we've seen in the past are being considered for infractions that involve forbidden substances or "designer drugs."

The USEF Hearing Committee is also committed to finding the people who are truly responsible for infractions. They'll look into all involved in each case, not just the person listed as trainer on an entry blank. Veterinarians who are coming up with new and more

dangerous drugs will also start to be held accountable for their actions.

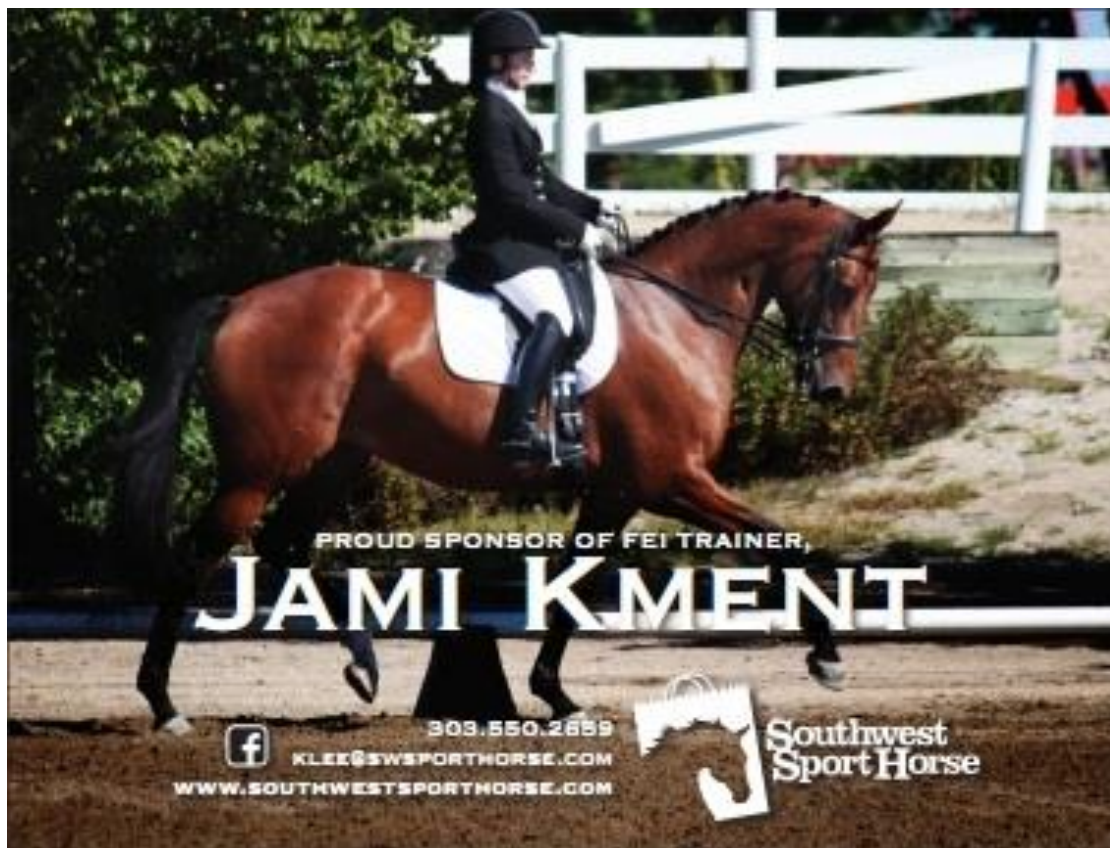
**NEW EXPECTATIONS**

As members of the USEF and participants in the world of showing horses we're going to have to take responsibility for changing our own culture. As judges we're going to have to be sure we're not penalizing horses that make mistakes caused by enthusiasm or exuberance. We'll also have to make sure we're rewarding athletic ability, talent and brilliance above everything else.

As course designers we need to be sure we're building courses that showcase good jumping and good riding, not making the job at hand so easy that overmedicated horses shine. As riders and trainers we'll need to be looking for horses that are able to do their jobs without help from illegal substances and also take the time to teach both our horses and riders the skills they need to perform well.

Our culture may also need to be altered to the point where we aren't required to show too often either to qualify for the top shows or to earn our living. And as owners we'll have to keep our expectations in alignment with reality so we don't push the animals in our care past what they're able to do. I don't think any

*Article continues on next page*



## From the Judge's Point of View

### *The Happy Horse*

Successful trainers often refer to the importance of the horse's happiness. Riders must remember that the horses' emotions are not influenced by an occasional carrot or by the rider's exuberance after a good ride in the ring.

It is important not to treat a horse as a human friend who will understand periods of separation, silence and excuse our frailties. The horse's happiness depends on the daily routine and the environment. Most important is the balance of demand and reward in the training period. We must be patient, repetition must be measured and reward must be frequent with every sign of progress.

Treated with balanced requests during training sessions and relaxed rides around the property or in the country, the horse will be happy. It will show signs of joy that make a "good ride" brilliant.

*Rudolf Vlatten, USEF "S" Dressage Judge*

## *Change, continued from previous page*

of this is easy, but I do think the time has come to make some serious changes in our sport.

The most encouraging thing that I've learned over the past several months is that the overwhelming majority of horse people out there are very much in favor of cleaning up our sport and most importantly doing what is right for our horses.

Prior to the first town hall meeting the USEF held on this topic I was approached by many, many top young professionals in our sport asking for us to please do whatever it takes to get the use of illegal forbidden substances as well as the misuse of therapeutic medications under control. Since that meeting, I've also been approached by many, many top older professionals in our sport asking for exactly the same thing.

Most people want to do what is right for the horse and for competition. As we begin to make changes to facilitate this it's critical that we keep this thought in the forefront of our minds.

*Article courtesy of the Chronicle Connection, May 20, 2013 edition*

## Five Techniques for Coping with Bad Rides

*By Bonnie Walker, [Training Tip Tuesday](#)*

We have all been there - those days where you climb off your horse and ask yourself why you didn't take up macrame or bird watching. Bad rides can come in all shapes and sizes, the worst being when you do not dismount on your own, but rather are forcibly ejected. But perhaps you have plateaued in your learning and cannot grasp a new concept. You work and work and yet feel you are getting no better. Or maybe your horse has decided that the whole 'connection' aspect of the pyramid is for the birds, and it would be every so much more pleasant to trot around with his head straight up in the air. There are so many versions of the notorious 'bad ride', but the end result is the same: you feel like crud. Your morale is low, you feel hollow, or ashamed, or angry. Whatever your reaction, it is natural and in this article we will talk about some techniques to help you with those bad days.

**Number One:** Keep Perspective: We as human beings are hardwired to dwell on the negative. Open up any newspaper and that will become blatantly obvious. There is an evolutionary reason for that - if we focus in on that negative it will serve as a learning tool to, say, not poke the scorpion. But in our case it does not help. Right now, whether you are in the midst of a series of bad rides or not, take a moment to think about one of those great rides you have had. It might have been a week ago, or a month ago, but either way it gives you a context for these bad rides. The outline of that memory might be hazy, or you might have a thousand excuses why that ride does not matter, but push them out of your brain. That good ride you bring into mind will act as a focus point. It can be a goal, a crutch and an injection of positive energy all in one.

**Number Two:** Positive Self Talk: After a bad ride it is incredibly easy to sink into a bog of self-sabotage. After all you are the rider, aren't you? It is all your fault, isn't it? By the time you are done with yourself you might be huddled in the fetal position in the corner, you are such a bully toward yourself. Think about if you were teaching a student something new, and every time they made a mistake you called them a moron, or that they were stupid, or talentless and that they should just give up. Well you are your own teacher. If you treat yourself that way, you sabotage the student in you with that terrible, bullying teacher. So let's replace her. Find something in the ride that you can be proud of - perhaps you did not lose your temper, or that you got back on the horse, or that you kept trying. Perhaps it is even knowing that you did lose your temper and having the presence of mind to stop the exercise. Whatever it is, force that teacher in your brain to acknowledge the student with some positive words.



**Number Three:** Analyze: Now that your teacher is getting more well-adjusted and isn't bullying the student in your head, it is time we put her to work. Off horse analysis is integral to working productively, especially if you only ride one horse a few days a week. I highly suggest journaling. And I highly suggest journaling in the third person. It is very easy to slip back into your old modes of negativity and dwelling in first person journaling (aka: I just can't get it. I am no good.) When you treat yourself like you are your own instructor, it forces you to analyze the whys and hows (aka: Laura is sitting too heavily on her seat bones and this is causing Starlight to drop his back. Laura's trainer says she needs to take more weight into her thigh and shorten her stirrup for a horse so young.)

**Number Four:** Connect With Other Riders: If there is no one in your barn that you can speak with, then go online. There are many supportive networks of riders who all understand what it is to pick yourself up (sometimes literally) out of the dirt and trudge onward. Of course you are always welcome to leave comments on this site, and there are many more out there that you can commiserate with other riders that have been there.

**Number Five:** Try Something Different: Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If the method you are trying is failing, then try something else. Switch rings, go on a trail day to refresh yourself, feel how your body is aiding and attempt to resist falling into the same rut. Get off and watch your instructor ride the movement on your horse, ask her or him to show you with their own bodies. Try it at a walk. Get on a mechanical horse and strengthen your seat. Take a lunge lesson. The options go on and on. If you are plateaued, stuck or in a rut, then that is the time to get creative, get proactive and most importantly to be kind to yourself. You are doing this because you love it, and so each issue that comes along is one that needs to be tackled with that same passion as you feel when things are going your way.

Before long you will have another good ride and that is the point where you will be all grins and elation. If you have really absorbed this article, though, you will also be mentally preserving that good ride for when the tables turn yet again. For that is the nature of horses, they are a series of ups and downs, positives and negatives. You need to have the techniques and support necessary to ride the hills and valleys that come your way.

## Training Thoroughbreds for Tomorrow, Today

By Jennifer B. Calder

From jumping to dressage to eventing to pleasure riding, the retired race horse has long proven its ability and athleticism beyond the racetrack. Warmbloods have come to dominate at the elite levels of horse sport over the past decades, but off-the-track Thoroughbreds have enjoyed a renaissance of popularity in recent years, thanks in no small part to awareness-raising organizations dedicated to their aftercare like the Retired Racehorse Challenge, CANTER and New Vocations, to name just a few.

But while this aftercare is essential, there's also a pioneering and bold idea quietly taking shape within a small racing syndicate outside of Saratoga, N.Y., called Mosaic Racing Stable. Rather than waiting for "retirement" to begin retraining these equine athletes for their second careers, founding partner Monica Driver incorporates a variety of schooling exercises into her race training—taking an essentially "before-care" approach.

From its inception, the members of Mosaic Racing, Driver explains, "agreed to always do right by the horse, even after racing." The syndicate puts aside 15 percent of each horse's race earnings for their retirement. But planning for the future doesn't stop there.

"It made sense to me that if we were agreeing to care for the horse after racing, starting right away to prepare for that was a good idea—especially since it can make the horse happier in his job," she says.

### COMMON SENSE

While Driver's idea is innovative, it's not without precedent. Seattle Slew, the only undefeated Triple Crown winner (1977), was brought along with dressage work in concert with his race training in an effort to help the gangly and unbalanced colt become more effective on the track.

But herein lies one difference between Driver and other trainers. She's implementing this cross-training approach with an eye toward the horse's future, not simply in the hopes of creating a better race horse. And lest some worry it undermines their racing prowess, Driver has found strong support for her concept among some of the country's top race horse trainers.

One of her current horses, a spectacular dark colt named Analysis, spent this winter with Hall of Fame trainer H. Allen Jerkens in Florida and will continue his

spring racing campaign at Belmont Park (N.Y.) under the expert eye of Jerkens' son and fellow trainer, Jimmy Jerkens.

Driver found Allen a sympathetic partner early on. He and Driver are old friends (Driver has fond memories of working for him as a hot-walker in the '70s), and she saw firsthand what Jerkens did to keep his horses happy.

"[Allen] was always doing this—turn-out pens, riding them in the afternoon, riding them bareback, riding them the wrong way on the track, jogging them endlessly," recalls trainer Bill Higgins, a 30-year friend and colleague of Allen's. "[He] always had a bent for that, so when it was introduced by way of Monica, it wasn't that big of a jump."

Jimmy echoes that sentiment about his father. "Years ago at Belmont, my dad used to use a corral where they'd set up jumps [for steeplechase training]," he recalls. "It was a little course inside of a quarter-mile training track. I remember he had a couple of fillies that were kind of sour from doing the same old thing, and they got a kick out of it, and it seemed to turn them around. When you have a horse that's very sour, you've got to try to do things to turn their heads around. Sometimes things like that are a godsend."

The Jerkenses aren't alone. Michael Matz, Olympic medalist show jumper turned trainer of 2006 Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro and 2012 Belmont Stakes winner Union Rags, has long enjoyed the benefits of cross-training his horses. Matz likes to utilize cavaletti to "get their attention," believing "it keeps their interest and is good for their minds." So does it really make good sense to train a race horse over poles or even fences?

"If I didn't think it made sense, I wouldn't do it!" Matz replies with a laugh.

"Monica's approach makes *a lot* of sense," adds Rodney Jenkins, another legendary jumper-turned-race trainer. "It sure takes the boredom out of the horse—the everyday race horse that does the same old dang thing. It's like a person. I think it freshens the horses' mental state up, and also can't hurt him as far as getting fit!"

### A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

It is this very word, "freshening," that Driver uses to describe her approach.





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*He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul... Ps. 23: 2,3*

## Thoroughbreds, continued from page 15

"I hate to use the word 'cross-training,' as the implications are so strenuous," she says. "We were really 'freshening' while using the time and good riders to teach something *fun* and useful for the future. It's for the mind *and* for the future. It's just good horsemanship."

"Horses need downtime from any endeavor, I think. They need time off to graze, hang out and be horses, especially when they're asked to live in a city and do something as physically and mentally demanding and stressful as training and racing," she adds. "We don't believe much in 2-year-old racing, and we don't believe in year-round racing for our horses."

Mosaic therefore winters their horses in Aiken, S.C., which allowed for Driver's "before-care" idea to flourish. The area is chock full of top trainers in multiple disciplines over the winter months, and Driver was eager to tap into that wealth of expertise.

The horses begin their winter downtime at Red Top Farm, run by DiAnn Langer, who rode for the USET's first allfemale team at Spruce Meadows (Alberta) in the late 1970s. Since the '80s, Langer has focused on starting and training hunters and jumpers, beginning in Los Angeles and then moving her base of operations to Aiken in 2007. But she has plenty of history with Thoroughbreds.

"I got exposed to the race horses [early on]," said Langer, whose first husband, Richard Lundy, worked for celebrated trainers Lucien Laurin and Charlie Wittingham. "I had the privilege of standing in the barn when Secretariat got off the truck; it was pretty exciting! Riva Ridge, Upper Case, Spanish Riddle—all those—I was familiar with, and it was very exciting to see those great horses."

After six weeks or so of turn-out time with Langer at Red Top, Mosaic's horses are taught to lengthen and shorten their stride, bend both directions, go over cavaletti, do a little bit of jumping and most importantly, as Langer says, "to walk on a loose rein. That's a novel idea! I think that when they come off the track, they're pretty road-weary. They're stressed. It's a very intense atmosphere, and letting them have that moment to take a breath, I think it's very important."

"Some Thoroughbreds have never even felt a leg on their side," Driver adds. "This is such a small but obvious thing to consider when thinking ahead to a new career. The rider's legs are a crucial part of any other equine discipline except racing, and of course, driving."

Driver also paired up with like-minded trainer Suzy Haslup, who has a foot in both the racing and OTTB worlds. For years before she met Driver, Haslup always made sure she started her racing Thoroughbreds by exposing them to a variety of experiences and situations.

"[Other] trainers have always accused me of breaking [race horses] like show horses," she says. "I always do a lot of groundwork, I always long-lined them, and then they graduated into a show ring. I always had a nice sand ring with jumps so they were exposed to that kind of thing, and we'd do cavaletti. I always broke my horses as if they would be something else someday."

As someone with decades of experience, Haslup learned that a little extra effort in the beginning "makes it a whole lot easier when you get those horses back," she says. "It makes it *a lot* easier to retrain them and make them into something else and sell them."

Haslup also made a point of "hiring the best event riders she could find," to help train her horses, one of which was U.S. eventing team member Heidi White. She galloped horses in the morning for Haslup and worked on eventing in the afternoons.

### NOT AT THE HORSE'S EXPENSE

Vicarious, a gorgeous dappled gray mare (Vicar—Watt Ever, Distinctive Pro), was Mosaic's first guinea pig, so to speak, in the before-care program. Driver sent her to Haslup in the winter of her 2-year-old year to be conditioned at the Aiken Training Track prior to racing with the Jerkenses at Belmont in the spring.

In their daily workouts, White began by asking Vicarious to balance herself and work off her hind end at the trot as they hacked to and from the track. By her second winter in Aiken, she was taking on small jumps, putting on weight and having a blast.

"She loved it," Langer recalls. "She was a natural. She was beautiful."

In a heart-wrenching turn of fate, Vicarious, who retired sound off the track in the fall of 2010 at the age of 5 with a very respectable \$114,172 in earnings and a bright future in show jumping, died of colic on the operating table in early 2011. Driver says she's not the only one who still cries over the mare every now and then.

*Article continues on following page*

## **Thoroughbreds, continued from previous page**

"I don't have many photographs of horses on my walls, but I keep one of her," White admits.

While Driver, White, Haslup and Langer never got to see the gray mare with the gorgeous, floating trot collect ribbons in the show ring, the mode of her training endures. Mosaic currently has two colts following in her footsteps, Circuitous (Skip Away–Watt Ever, Distinctive Pro) and Analysis (Freud–Watt Ever, Distinctive Pro). Both are simultaneously learning to race and beginning their education for whatever will come next.

"Mosaic and its partners want to enjoy racing what [horses] we have," Driver says. "The investment isn't great. Our goal isn't a stallion prospect or a Derby

winner. Not that we wouldn't enjoy that! But we want to have fun at the races and help our horses have fun.

"Of course we want to succeed and make money, but we want to try not to have that happen at the expense of the horse," she adds. "That expense is too high."

With an outlook like that, it's clear that regardless of their performance on the racetrack, Driver's horses are sure to be set up for a promising future.

"If a horse is owned by Monica," muses Jimmy Jerkens, "they're the luckiest horse in the world."

*This article appeared in the May 2013 issue of **The Chronicle Connection**.*

## **Good Luck to the Region 4 NAJYR Teams!**

*By Lisa Van Stratten*

2013 has been another busy year for youth riders qualifying for the North American Junior and Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC).

The NAJYRC is the premier equestrian competition in North America for junior and young riders, age 14-21. Young equestrians come from the United States, Bermuda, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean Islands to vie for team and individual FEI medals in the three Olympic equestrian disciplines of show jumping, dressage, eventing, and FEI World Equestrian Games disciplines of reining and endurance. The competition is run under rules of the FEI (Federation Equestre Internationale), the international governing body for equestrian sport, and is the only FEI championship held annually on this continent.

This year, Region 4 will be represented by Young Riders, Clare Krska, Kelli Montgomery, and Krista Spencer and Junior Rider Dallas Van Stratten. These riders qualified by earning an average of 62% or higher on three sets of the Team and Individual Test for their level and a 62% on a Freestyle for their level. To see how all the regions compared please click [here](#) to see the Young Riders and [here](#) to see the Junior Riders.

The competition will be held July 17<sup>th</sup> through July 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY. Because this is an FEI show, the stable areas are locked down and only those with pre-issued credentials are allowed inside the gated areas. Dressage will be held in the Rolex Arena and anyone is welcome to attend!

The Dressage Team Test competition for both Junior and Young Riders is scheduled to begin Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 AM. The Dressage Individual Test competition for both Junior and Young Riders will take place on Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 10:00 AM. The top 15 in each division will go on to compete their Freestyles on Saturday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, beginning with Juniors at 1:30 PM and Young Riders at 5:00 PM.

Not going to be in Lexington that week? No worries! It will be broadcast on the USEF Network! Go to [this link](#) to watch the event live throughout the week! A complete schedule can be found [here](#).

Are you a Breyer horse collector? BreyerFest 2013 will be occurring at this same week at the horse park. There were thousands of people attending. Follow [this link](#) to more info about BreyerFest 2013.

Want to help Dallas, Clare, Kelli and Krista? You can help by making donation to the Region 4 riders! Donations help cover the expense of FEI show fees, stabling, and transportation. The NAJYRC is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization and your financial support is tax-deductible. You will receive a confirmation letter when your donation is received by the USDF Office. Checks should be made out to "USDF Region 4 FEI Junior and Young Rider Account" and mailed to Nancy Gorton, Pine Hill Farm, 8000 NW Mace Road, Kansas City, MO 64152. The team will appreciate your support!

Good luck Dallas, Clare, Kelli and Krista!

## An Introduction to 3B Enterprises, LLC

By Lisa Van Stratten

I had the pleasure of meeting up with Ian Bevington, owner of 3B Enterprises, LLC, who is an Annual Sponsor for NDA. Ian is a Certified Journeyman Farrier from Valley, NE, who services clients from all around the Lincoln, Omaha, Columbus area. Ian is a member of the American Farrier's Association who services all horses but most of his clients ride dressage. He also mentioned that many of his clients who practice other disciplines are now migrating toward dressage! Maybe interest in Western Dressage will continue to increase?

Originally from Valley, NE, Ian graduated from the Oklahoma Horse Shoeing School in Oklahoma City, OK, in 1998. He has since completed various certification programs and earned endorsements through the American Farrier's Association. He is married and has a 15 year old son and 11 year old daughter who shows



*Article continues on following page*

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### 3B Enterprises, continued from previous page

minis! His family owns 3 minis and 2 horses but he does not ride much now. His hobbies are hunting and fishing. Ian's wife is also in the horse industry. Erin Bevington works at HETRA as an Instructor and is the Finance & Administrative Manager.

Communication is very important to Ian because it helps him determine how to best trim and shoe your horse. There are many things he can do to help keep your horse healthy and happy. If your horse feels off or you are having any kind of problems, let him know. There may be something he can do to try to help. Ian has a good working relationship with all the area veterinarians. He will contact them if he has questions or they may contact him to help with a problem. Always keep good communication between the owner, farrier, and vet. Let them all know what is going on with your horse so they can work together to find a solution.

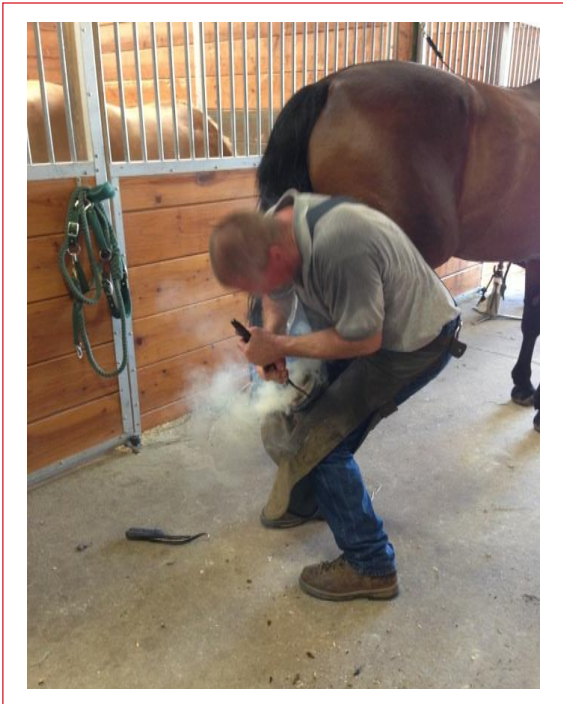
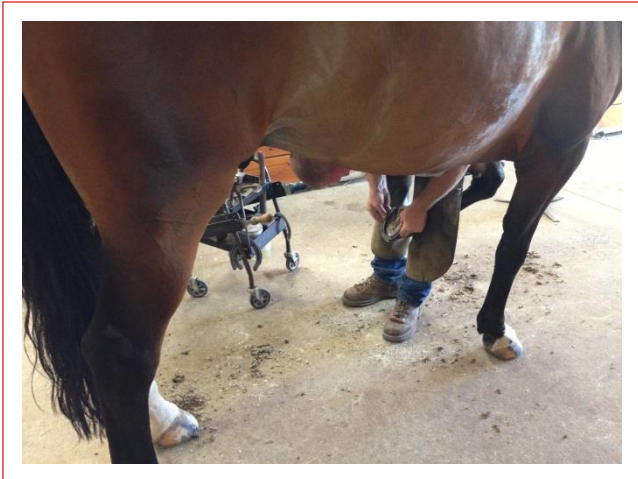
So where did 3B come from? It's just the name of the corporation that was his grandfather, father who are in construction, and Ian, who has done a little construction in the past, but is strictly a farrier service now. He enjoys what he does now and hopes to continue working with horses for a long time. Ian runs a multi-farrier business. He has two teams that make up 3B. Full-time farriers that work with Ian are Zac Hickle from Elkhorn, Spencer Braswell from Elkhorn but originally from Texas, and Shane Walde from Omaha, who is part-time and runs his own farrier service. All of Ian's team is working toward obtaining their Certified Journeyman Farrier status. There are currently only 7 Certified Journeyman Farriers in the entire state of Nebraska!

I watch Ian carefully and skillfully pull shoes, trim, inspect, resize, and place new shoes. It was fun to watch and ask a hundred questions. I had never seen a farrier burn shoes on! Ian heated up the shoe than placed it on the hoof, checking over and over the exact

fit and continuing to make adjustments to the shoe. Ian told me that when you trim a hoof, it opens the ends of the fibers that make up the hoof, allowing moisture to exit and exposing it to the ground and bacteria. By burning this newly trimmed area, it cauterizes these open ends, sealing in the moisture. It also makes for a perfect fit as it flattens the bottom after the trim. The shoes are fitted after they are heated up in the forge. The metal was glowing orange. How hot does it get? 1800 degrees! Hot enough to cook a marshmallow in 1 second.

How do you know how good your farrier is? Well, just like those for NASCAR pit crews, there are competitions to see how fast they are. Actually, farriers compete annually at the American Farrier's Association's National Forging & Horseshoeing Competition. They compete in many categories and divisions for speed and accuracy. They compete individually and as teams. The competition moves around to different locations each year. The 2013 competition has already taken place in Baton Rouge, LA. Although Ian does attend, he says the competition is tuff and he has not placed yet. That's OK with me. Ian is kind and respectful to the horses and he cares about them. He was gentle and my horse was at ease around him, even when Ian put that hot shoe on his hoof. He never flinched. I'll pick safe and happy over fast and furious any day.

A typical trim is \$45 plus additional trip charge depending on where you are located. If you are looking for a good farrier, give Ian a call to set up an appointment at 402-677-6008.

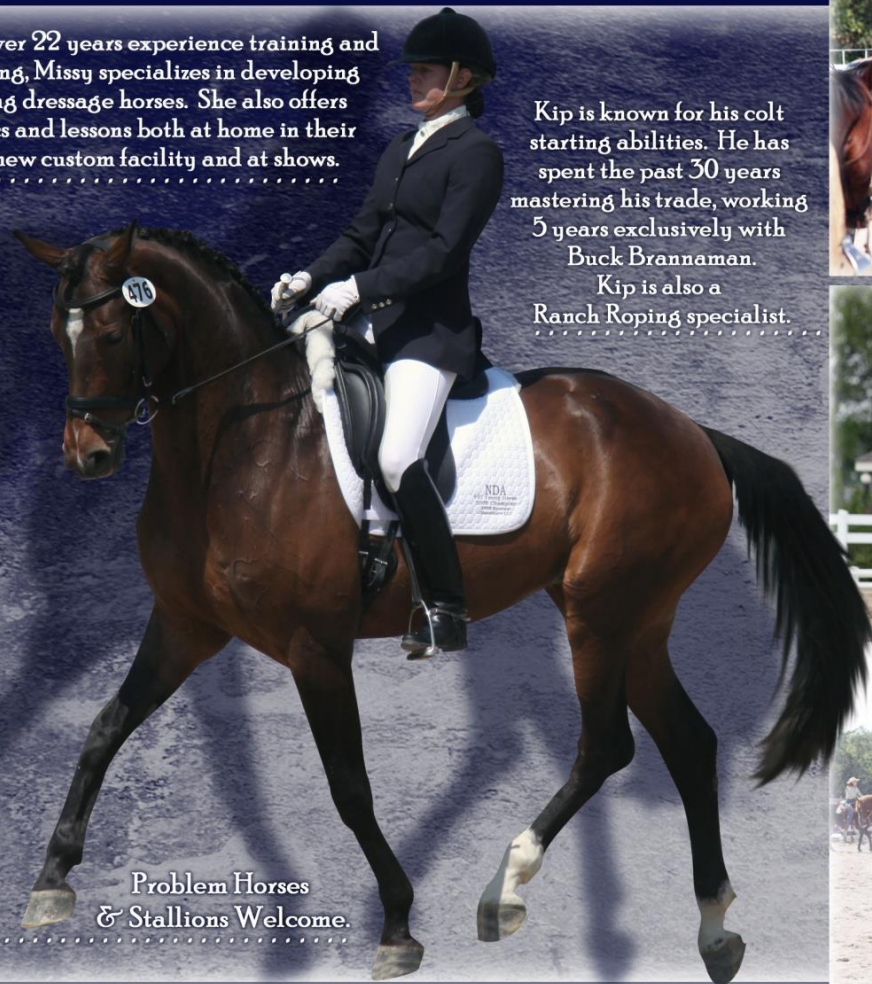


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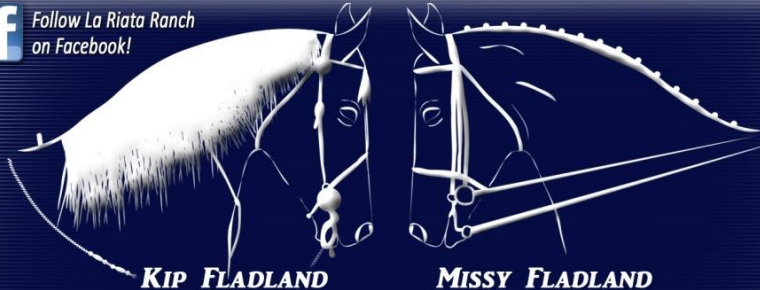


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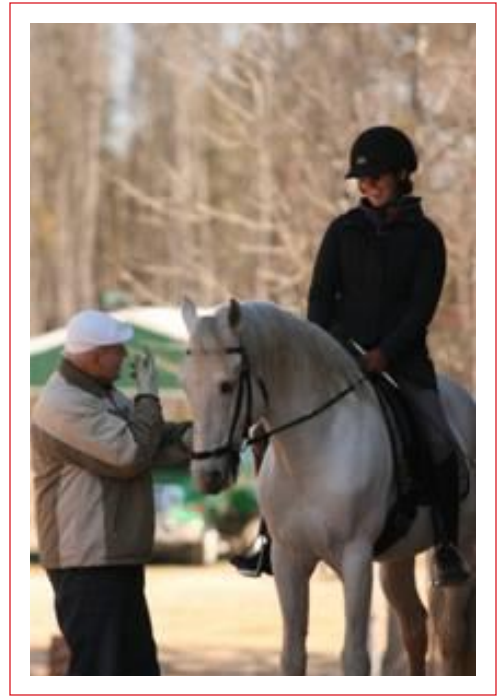
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## Former Chief Rider of the Spanish Riding School and USDF Hall of Famer Debuts Classical Dressage Training Website

Karl Mikolka, USDF Hall of Famer and former Chief Rider of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, brings the art of classical dressage to the web with the unveiling of *MikolkaDressage.com*, a website dedicated to the schooling of the horse and rider as it was practiced and refined at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, Austria. Techniques of the Spanish Riding School were primarily passed along verbally through one-on-one instruction. So before it is lost, Mikolka is making the treasure of those time tested techniques available to all serious equestrian students. These techniques have been proven to be effective for hundreds of years and correctly applied, are still today practiced at the highest levels of competitive dressage.

*"I truly believe that the art of training a horse correctly and classically can be demonstrated beautifully in the competitive arena by following the methods of one of our greatest masters, Karl Mikolka. For any dressage enthusiast out there, it is an absolute MUST to visit [MikolkaDressage.com](http://MikolkaDressage.com). There are downloadable articles, training exercises and so much valuable information you owe it to yourself (and your horse!) to check it out. There's no one like Kar!!!!"*



*Photo of Emily Wright-Thomasson  
By Mary Beth Woodall*

*Shannon Peters (Student of Karl Mikolka, FEI competitor and wife of Steffen Peters - One of America's most decorated dressage riders)*

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*Donations of all sizes are greatly appreciated!*



Through this site, Mikolka, who has devoted his life to the training of the Dressage horse, brings the values of Classical Horsemanship to riders of all levels by offering a thorough foundation in all aspects of the basics up to the most advanced movements.

For equestrians interested in feedback and advice on specific training issues, *MikolkaDressage.com* also offers the opportunity for riding evaluations and training consultation by video from Karl Mikolka.

His desire is to provide riders of any discipline with the tools to create a safe, reliable and correctly moving pleasure horse and also offer the competition rider an abundance of techniques formulated to produce the winning partner. Everything needed for success in the sport of Dressage can be found in articles and exercise charts throughout the site.

For the first time, over sixty information-packed articles and detailed arena exercises are available for purchase via instant download from the site, and new essays and exercises will be regularly added.

Each article and exercise has been painstakingly written and prepared and covers such dressage topics as: Safety in all aspects of training from the ground as well as from the saddle; how to prepare for and ride flying changes, how to ride correct circles and voltes to increase suppleness, submissiveness, agility, strength and balance; how to train and ride shoulder-in; what to look for in performing the correct half pass; the correct execution of the half halt plus the groundwork for pirouettes, piaffe and passage.

In addition to the lessons, the site features an extensive biography and gallery page showing highlights from Karl's rich life in dressage, including rare never-before-published photos from his years at the Spanish Riding School.

To learn more, visit the site at <http://www.MikolkaDressage.com>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT Anita Adams at [anitaadamsdressage@gmail.com](mailto:anitaadamsdressage@gmail.com)

## About Karl Mikolka

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Alois Podhajsky accepted Karl Mikolka as élève at the Spanish Riding School in 1955. His teachers included such Masters as Hans Irbinger, Joseph Riedler, Ignaz Lauscha and Alfred Cerha, who became Karl's primary mentor.

In 1967 Colonel Hans Handler promoted Karl to the highest rank of Chief Rider, and in 1968 Karl accepted a position offered by the Confederação Brasileira de Hipismo in Rio de Janeiro - the Equestrian Federation of Brazil - to establish a nucleus of Dressage for developing future international horses and riders.

In 1972 Karl moved to the United States to teach and train at Friar's Gate Farm, a prestigious riding center in Pembroke, Massachusetts where he established and directed the Massachusetts Dressage Academy.

In 1980 he joined the team at Tempel Farms in Wadsworth, Illinois, where he trained Lipizzaner stallions for nearly twenty years.

For many years, Karl was an AHSA Dressage Judge and in that capacity served on the judging panels for several U.S. Olympic selection trials. In recognition of his many contributions to the development and promotion of Classical Dressage in the United States, Karl was inducted into the United States Dressage Federation Hall of Fame in 2003. His impressive and extensive body of written work, together with his experience teaching hundreds of clinics around the world, distinguish his contributions as some of the most credible and contemporary influences in the training of Dressage horses and riders.

Karl and his wife, Lynn, make their home in Gloucester, Massachusetts.



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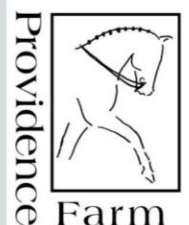
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## Working on Riding Straight



Start this exercise on the full arena trying to get your horse moving forward with rhythm and straightness.

Once you have your horse's attention, start planning for your first circle.

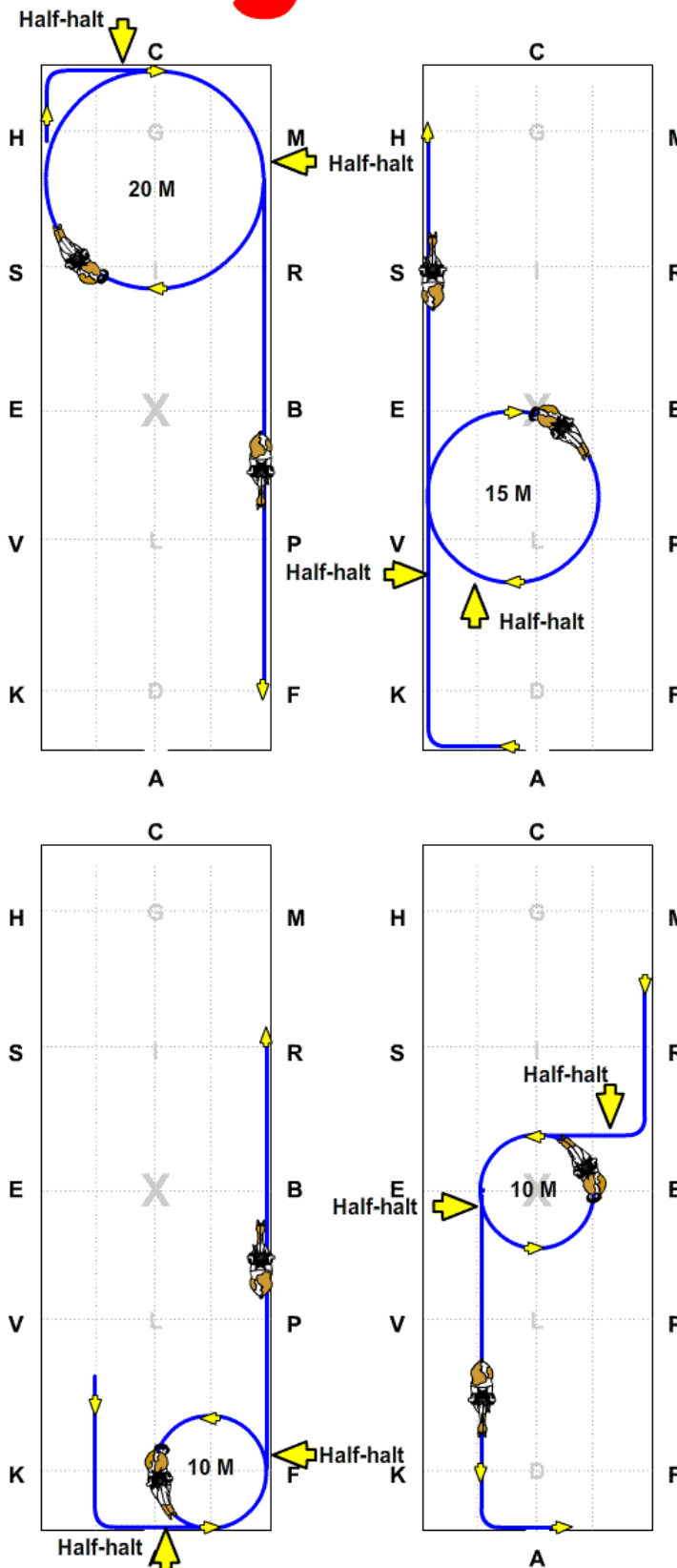
Ride through the corner and half-halt as you approach the curve or your circle.

Focus on keeping your horse straight on the circle. Remember: a circle is curved, so straight means keeping your horse's spine and body curved with along the path of the circle.

Before you move your horse off the circle half-halt again and prepare to travel down the straight line along the rail or through the arena.

Practice this both directions at the walk, trot and canter.

Always start with the largest circle and you can stay on that circle until you have achieved straightness, rhythm and balance.





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## Is Your Horse the Weight He Needs to Be?

By the Editors of Practical Horseman Magazine

*You can determine whether your horse is too fat, too thin, or just right using these weight guidelines from Dane Frazier, DVM, a past president of the American Endurance Ride Conference.*

You can size up whether your horse is carrying enough body weight, too little, or too much by checking out his six fat storage areas with your eyes and your fingers:

- crest of his neck
- along his withers
- behind his shoulder
- his ribs
- along his spine
- in front of his tailhead

When feeling for fat, you can differentiate it from muscle because fat has a soft, non-fibrous feeling, as if you're pressing into an even mass. (Muscle, by contrast, feels like bundles of substantial fibers that lie in the same direction.) A thin layer of fat over bone or conditioned muscle feels like a layer of foam upholstery over a firmer surface. Where fat is thicker (as on a fat horse), you can move its mass around independently of bone or muscle underneath.

### He's too thin if...

When you stand back and look at a thin horse, the planes of his neck and shoulder appear flat and you're aware of the bony structures beneath. His withers and pelvic bones are noticeable and you probably see the outline of all his ribs under his skin. A "poverty line" may be visible on the side of his upper hind leg, and the muscles on either side of the line look flat. His spine may protrude above the level of his back muscles; you can see the tips of individual vertebrae.

Palpate this horse's fat storage areas and you'll still be able to find some fat at his tailhead and in a thin covering over his ribs. His neck and withers, however, feel hard and flat. It's difficult to feel the fat stored along his spine, where your fingers can easily explore the tips of the vertebrae. If you see a vertical line in his haunches and have any doubt whether it's a poverty line, your fingers can let you know. The muscles beside a poverty line feel flaccid, not full and resilient as they do in the haunches of a fit horse.

### He's too fat when...

A fat horse's muscle definition disappears as fat fills the contours between muscle masses. His ribs vanish, his neck appears thick or meaty (unless he's a natural "pencil neck") and the outline of his withers blurs. A pad of fat behind his

*Article continues on following page*



shoulder muscle blends the shoulder smoothly into his rib cage. Fat fills in around his spine; he may even have a crease down his back deep enough to cradle an egg safely.

When you palpate an overweight horse, your fingers can surround the masses of fat in any of his six storage areas and wiggle them. As the bundles of fat cells pile up, this tissue takes on the texture of gelatin--and you can feel a thin layer of fat overspreading his muscles. You can, however, still detect his ribs by probing.

***He's just right when...***

If you're an amateur rider whose horse is in the amateur hunter or low jumper divisions, or through novice-level eventing or First Level dressage, the best body condition for him is the "moderately fleshy" range. His back may be level--his spine and the band of muscle (and fat) on each side form a flat surface--or may have a *slight* crease down the center. His neck is well filled out--the sides and topline are convex rather than flat--but it still looks muscular, not meaty. His withers are defined but appear rounded, not sharp, and you can see the muscle of his shoulder.

You can't see your horse's ribs when he's in this condition, but you can easily feel them--and you can feel fat in the spaces between them and in the girth area behind his shoulder. You can feel some fat over his withers and behind his shoulders, and there's a softness to the fat around his tailhead.

If your horse's condition falls not at this happy medium but at the too-thin or too-fat end of the scale, you need to adjust his diet accordingly. Reduce a fat horse's grain by half and keep his hay ration constant, substituting grass or timothy for any alfalfa in his diet. Give a thin horse all the hay he will eat and substitute alfalfa for as much as half of the hay. Boost his carbohydrates with increased grain or (if he gets hot) with soaked beet pulp, oil and/or rice bran. If a just right horse tends to be high, replace corn or mixed sweet feed in his diet with oats. If he's sluggish, substitute

mixed sweet feed or corn by weight for any plain oats in his diet.

*Excerpted from "Why Weight? Fat, Fitness & Your Horse," originally published in the November 1997 issue of Practical Horseman magazine.*



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### Nebraska Dressage Association Contact

Do you have any submissions you'd like to share? Photos? Upcoming events? Please send all ideas and articles to Shaina Kennedy at [shaina.plum@gmail.com](mailto:shaina.plum@gmail.com) by August 25, 2013. Thank you!

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