

Dressage Monthly

ISSUE 4

OCTOBER 2008

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Andalusians of Central
Texas

Belton, TX

Come on Take a Risk! Riding to WIN

Deirdre R. Sabo

Every dressage master will tell you, **WINNERS TAKE RISKS.** I do not mean taking a risk with your horse's health or your own health.

The risk I am talking about is in your performance. You have some choices while you are riding a test. You could hold back and have a steady, but boring test. When you make this choice you can only hope that the rest of the rides have major mistakes. Your other choice is to take that risk and really perform a fabulous test. Those who take the risk and succeed will always win.

How do you take that risk?

Before a risk is taken the rider must assess how the horse is behaving on any certain day.

For Example:

I was in the show arena the day before the show began, and I was attempting the medium trot with Alejandro. Every time I went across a certain diagonal, he would break into canter. I went back to basics and really tried to regain his balance, but once I went back to that diagonal,

he did it again. I cut my losses on that movement and moved on to work on other exercises. The next day I was worried about how he would handle the medium trot across that diagonal. That day I decided that a risk should not be taken on that diagonal. I made this decision because taking that risk might have been detrimental to his training. I received a "6" on the movement (instead of a "4") and did not win the class, but the next day I was able to take more of a risk and received a "7" on that same movement.

The best way to ensure that your risk will not back-fire is to practice your risk at home.

For Example:

The lengthen, medium, and extended canter is one of the main moves that is ridden conservatively. Riders are nervous that they will not be able to stop their horse into a nice transition. When a rider is practicing at home, he will not be judged on when the transition takes place. Because of this, the rider is able to ensure the horse always has a nice transition

no matter where it is. After practicing these good transitions, the rider will find that he can begin to ask for this transition whenever he wishes. He can really push his horse into bigger and bigger extensions and since his horse will perform the down transition to the collected canter confidently, and with out tension. Because this rider practiced this movement at home and took the risks at home first, he knows that this is a risk he can take at show.

The risk does not only exist in the movement itself, but also in the required movements before and after are at risk as well. The reason the risk is so successful for winners is that they just proved that they have great communication with their horses. They were able to show a spectacular movement and still perform wonderful transitions. These risks take practice, but remember perfection at home is never the goal. The goal of practice is to develop the rider's feel and the horse's reaction. Remember, no one is judging you at home, so take that risk and build your confidence. Once you are sure of your risk at home, taking a risk at the show will be easy!

Mental Thought of the Month

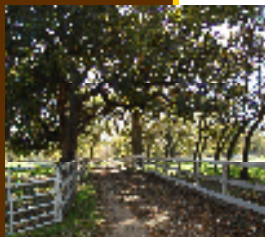
Forming your horse's bend with your legs:

Think of watching water flowing around boulders and rocks...the water is bending and moving around the rocks. Do you have your image? Your horse is the water and your legs are the boulders. When you place your legs in any position, your "water" will move to form around your legs. The reason your horse is water and

not cake batter in a cake mold is because...cake batter does not have forward motion(we would not want to box our horses into a mold because, this would stop forward motion), but water is always moving. Remember that we always want our brain and horse thinking "forward." When your inside leg is at the girth and your outside leg is placed just a touch behind the girth, your horse will line his body up to match yours. This forms the

bend.





On the farm at Andalusians of Central Texas

“There is one axiom that every prospective rider should never lose sight of: to become a rider takes patience and again endless patience.

-Alois Podhajsky

The Riding Teacher

Teaching and Riding Dressage: The Importance of Learning and Knowing Classical Dressage Theory

The learning process never ends! Dressage is a life long pursuit of knowledge.

There are many ways to accomplish each movement in dressage, but the theory of what is to be gained and what the rider should feel stays the same.

The best places to learn true dressage theory is from the old masters of this art form. Xenophon, Podhajsky, Balkenhol, Hoyos, Theodorescu, and Zettle are just a few sources of wonderful horsemanship knowledge. For reading choices, please refer to the recommended reading section.

Why is this so important you ask?

A rider and an instructor’s building blocks for training are based on ancient horsemanship principles that have been practiced for thousands of years. The knowledge of theory puts all the pieces together.

Why are you training shoulder-in? What does that movement do for your horse? The more you learn, the more you are able to answer the question: “WHY?”

AH...the question “WHY.” This should always be the question that goes through

a rider’s head. Dressage is not about performing movements at the letter, it is about developing a horse to his full potential. The dressage tests are guides for training. They let you know where your horse is in his training, and how much he can handle. Each level is a gateway that is allowing the horse to gain strength and balance to perform at his best as he moves up. This is why we ask “WHY.” Why is it so important to train the shoulder-in before passage? Dressage theory will tell you that the shoulder-in is the beginning of collection and a strength building exercise towards higher collection...that is why.

Our next question should be “HOW.” How do I perform a shoulder-in that will help my horse gain the strength he needs? How do I know when my horse is ready to be pushed to the next level?

These questions can only be answered by those who have been there and done it...one million times over, MASTERS.

Personal gain:

You go to your instructor, he/she tells you the theory

behind what is happening with your horse. You understand, go home, and hope you can understand it without your instructor. You heard the information, you understood it, but because you did not research the problem yourself it is less likely to stick.

If the student were to have an issue, do the research and come to an understanding because he or she did the work, it will be more likely to stay with that student. Now when that student is riding alone, he or she will have that knowledge ready to tackle the problem if it arises.

As an instructor, it is my goal to create thinking riders that can ride on their own and problem solve without the help of a trainer every minute of the ride. It is important to me that my students remain independent thinkers.

Only through extensive reading and understanding can a student hope to become a thinking rider.

Now it is time to pick up a book and start getting in tune with your horse.

Questions and Answers

Jill was telling me how neat it was to feel the correct response to the whip while riding Regulus. We have noticed that Leo is learning to bring his back legs up under himself more, and we are wondering if this is the beginnings of him catching on to this concept. Our question: How do you train a horse that the whip does not mean "go faster" but to bring his back legs under himself more? Elaine Hildreth and Jillian Anthony

Waco, Texas

Awesome question! What Jill might not realize yet is that her body is understanding how to ask for the correct response. Regulus is a school master and might be more fine tuned into Jill's core aids. Jill and Leo learned dressage together which might mean that in the beginning Jill's core muscles were not as refined as they are now. As Jill begins to use

her core correctly, Leo begins to give her the correct response to her aid supporting whip. What I am getting at is that we do not teach our horse's how to react to the whip, we tell them how to react by how our bodies are placed and used. If she were to use the whip (and leg...always) and open the core muscles, then she would get a reaction that was faster. If Jill were to hold her core muscles as she used whip and leg, then Leo would engage the hind legs, find the restraining core muscles and then send the energy up instead of out like in the former example.

The core muscles are a strong tool. They consist of not only the muscles in the abdomen, but the lower back as well. These muscles keep your balance, make transitions, and send the horse's energy where it needs to go. The rider might not think that the horse feels such a slight tighten, but they do. If a horse can feel a fly on its hair covered skin, it can feel you tighten your very strong core muscles.

The proper way to tighten these muscles is to take a deep breath in and then let the breath out. Feel how you are able to tighten your muscles as you breath out. So, number one...breathing is very important. (Please see article: Using Breathing Techniques to Improve The Half Halt)

When the muscles are tight, the rider's body needs to stay light in the saddle. Tightening of the core muscles never means sitting heavier. If anything, it should bring your upper body taller and your lower body longer.

Remember...we are not actually training our horses, we are finding the best way for them to perform what they do naturally with our weight on them. Dressage is a journey with your horse...a journey of finding out how to communicate with each other. Years of riding with patience will build your horse's strength and your communication, and that is all Dressage is about!

Fitness Moves: Leg Strength and Stability

Please consult your doctor before starting any fitness program

Your legs are very important to the process of each aid given. They must be able to work independently of the rest of your body. For instance, the rider should be able to apply the inside leg without allowing the rest of the body to contort. This exercise will allow you to develop the muscles necessary to isolate your legs.

You will not need any equipment to do this move, but to make it more of a challenge you may add dumbbells of any weight.

1. Cross your right leg over your left leg.
2. Squat down until your thighs are 90 degrees to the ground

3. Raise and repeat 10 times
4. Repeat with left leg crossed over the right leg.
5. Do enough reps to feel the challenge.

"You don't have to be Mr. Universe to ride dressage."

"Not muscle strength, but muscle control."

What to look forward to next month!

- Teaching and Riding Dressage: ALWAYS go back to the basics: How concentration on only performing movements will jeopardize your overall performance.
- The Importance of having GOALS
- The Feeling of Collection
- Mental Thought of the Month: Turn on the Haunches
- Classically starting your young prospect
- Fitness Move of the Month: Hip stretch
- How to Think Like a Champion: Letting go of what cannot be Controlled
- Words to live by and words never to use.
- Exercise Notebook: Using Half Steps to enhance lower level collection
- Changing Your Expectations: My personal story on how I approached a train block with a young stallion.
- Recommended reading



🌟 How to Think like a CHAMPION: Visualization Techniques

Picture yourself riding your test:

Before you read on, go ahead and visualize your ride.....

How did you visualize your test?

Did you watch your test as if you were watching a video of yourself or as a spectator?

Or....

Did you visualize as if you were riding your horse? Could you could see his neck and ears and feel his movement?

The first example is called external visualization, while the sec-

ond example is called internal visualization.

Internal visualization has proven to be more effective because your brain believes that you actually rode that ride in your head. The more you practice that great test in your head, the more your brain will comprehend that feeling and duplicate it.

I like to use both techniques as I visualize my ride.

I want to feel the ride. It is very important to me that I feel how I want every step to feel.

I also want to see how I want the ride to look. It is important that I see what I want the judge to see.

By using both techniques, I am able to feel and see, thus able to put the two together. I can now say, "I want the judge to see this and this is what it feels like."

This takes practice, just as working a muscle does. Practice this everyday. Visualize every ride. It will be very hard at first, but with practice you will soon be feeling the perfect ride every time.

"ANY horse can do classical dressage, we just have to show them they can!"

- Deirdre R. Sabo

Events at Andalusians of Central Texas

October:

Lesson times available

Oct. 4th-5th: Dallas Dressage Yellow Rose Show Make-up date.

Oct. 11th: Deirdre Teaching Clinic at MCC, Waco, TX

Oct. 14th-19th: IALHA National Championships , Fort Worth, TX

Oct. 31st-Nov.2nd: Southwest Dressage Championships, Katy, TX

November:

Limited lesson times available

November 15th– Deirdre’s Wedding, Michigan

November 22– Deirdre Teaching clinic at Highlander Ranch, Waco, TX

No spots available for horses in training.

December:

Lesson times available...Available to take on horses for training

Recommended Reading



A Gymnastic Riding System Using Mind, Body, and Spirit: Progressive Training for Rider and Horse

By: Betsy Steiner and Jennifer Bryant

Great book for the rider to understand how your body and your horse’s body works to achieve balance. This book is perfect for a better understanding of dressage theory.

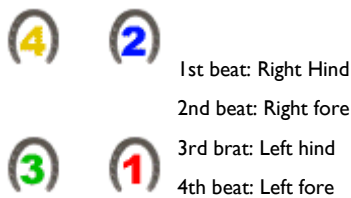
Can be found on Amazon.com

Exercise Notebook: Improve the Free Walk by Timing Your Aids Correctly

The **timing of your aids** is the number one priority to make your aids effective.

Lets talk about the walk:

The walk is a four beat gait with each leg having its own beat and step.



Our goal in the free walk is to cover as much ground as possible (with over stride) and have the horse in a long and low frame. Now how do we accomplish that without having the horse trot off or speed up too much?

The answer is in the timing of your inside leg aid.

First:

Keep the contact with your reins and feel how your inside leg swings into the horse as his abdomen swings away and then feel how your leg is pushed out as his abdomen pushes back

to the inside. When your leg swings into the horse (the abdomen moves away from your leg), this is when the inside hind leg is up in the air and can be influenced the most.

Once you really feel this, begin to push with your inside calf every time you feel your leg swing into the horse. A good way to remember this is to think:

Does it make any sense to push into my horse's side as he pushes against me? No, so I must go with the motion and push as his abdomen swings away from my leg. You are now telling his inside leg to step more under his body. His inside leg has some options while it is up in the air. It can shorten, step more under, step to the side, etc. In the free walk, it is the rider's responsibility to ensure that the leg takes the "step more under" option.

As for the frame of the head and neck:

As you are asking your horse to step more under, notice how your horse fills up your hands with a light pressure. You should now be able to give your reins

forward as your horse follows down and out. To ensure that your horse keeps this nice connection in the long frame, keep a light pressing leg when the abdomen swings away. This will ensure that you have long, ground covering strides and that your horse gives you the connection that he should be searching for.

The most important aspect of this movement is that the rider keeps a rhythm that follows the horse's movement, and that the rider uses the aids that flow with the horse and encourage instead of push.

-DRS

Using Breathing Techniques to Improve your Half Halt

Remembering to breathe is not as easy as it sounds...us riders should know! The way the rider uses his breathing directly affects the way the aid is perceived by the horse.

Breathing keeps not only the rider calm, but also keeps the horse calm and focused. When our body has the oxygen that it needs, our brain can better control our movements and reactions.

We are focusing on the half halt in this article because once you have begun to improve this essential tool you have begun to improve every other movement in dressage. How do we use our breathing to improve the half halt?

The half halt is the step or two when the rider restricts the forward motion with her core muscles, slight close of the hand, and then leg to send the horse up into the tightened core muscles.

The rider can better feel this if he is relaxed and supple in his seat. To help the rider achieve this, she must be able to take deep breaths and let them out as she relaxes over the saddle. This is one way to use the breathing technique. The other way is to take a deep breath in apply the half halt aids and then let the deep breath out slowing and you let the horse move forward again. This does a number of things. First, this sets the horse up for an incoming aid. Second, it relaxes the rider into the next movement. Third, it reminds the rider not to give the aids for half halt and then never let go. The half halt aids should only last a second. Theoretically, the half halt is preparing the horse for whatever movement is coming. When the rider practices the half halt in this way, soon the half halt aids become second nature while the rider is taking in deep breaths. When this

happens, the rider will be able to breathe in and breath out into any transition. Imagine you are coming to a diagonal and preparing for an extended trot...you will now be able to take in a deep breath and let it out, automatically give the half halt aids, and have a horse that is ready to go across the diagonal with power and balance.

Just “breath” into all of your movements and you will soon find that you have a horse that is happy and confident in its performance.

-DRS



Sabio GF

2003 PRE Stallion

Owned by: Andalusians of Central Texas

Trained and Ridden by: Deirdre R. Sabo



**Deirdre Dressage
&
Andalusians of Central Texas**

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Deirdre R. Sabo USDF Bronze and Silver Medalist

- I believe in always using the natural way of training horse and rider. It is very important that new horse owners and riders understand the basic principles of riding so that they and their horse may experience a healthy working relationship.
- I strive to improve the horse and rider so that they can enjoy their time together with strength and balance. I believe that dressage is the basic knowledge that all riders of all disciplines should learn to enhance their performance.
- A method should always be used when training the horse and rider and throughout my years of experience I have formulated a method that has been proven.

Andalusians of Central Texas Carol and Ronnie Marroquin

- *We offer Andalusians in Gray, Bay, and Black at . . .*

Andalusians of Central Texas which lies deep in the heart of Texas. And deep in our hearts is a love for the splendid Andalusian.

As with everyone who has seen the Spanish Horse, we too are enamored by their beauty, grace and temperament. And as so many others know, you can't own just one. We began with one mare and are steadily adding to our breeding program. We are definitely enjoying our endeavors as each year brings new adventures in raising Andalusians.

- *Through these adventures we have met many who also love Andalusians. We value their friendships and sincerely appreciate the time and talents they have shared. Their experience is an interregal part of our successes. Our goal is to produce Andalusians that will carry on the stately heritage of the Pura Raza Espanola - horses that display the regal elegance, and established characteristics of the true Spanish traditions. Horses that will in turn capture your heart.*

Classifieds

Horses for Sale:

Mariscala
2005 Gray Andalusian Mare



Financing available: Please see
www.prebreeder.com

Please contact Deirdre R.
Sabo if you re interested in
the Mare of a lifetime!

Deirdre-
Dressage@hotmail.com

Looking for quality warm-
bloods for sale?

Please contact:

Amanda Garrett

Stormin' G Ranch
College Station, Texas
Mandaroo006@gmail.com



If you wish to add any horses
or items for sale, please con-
tact Deirdre R. Sabo

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