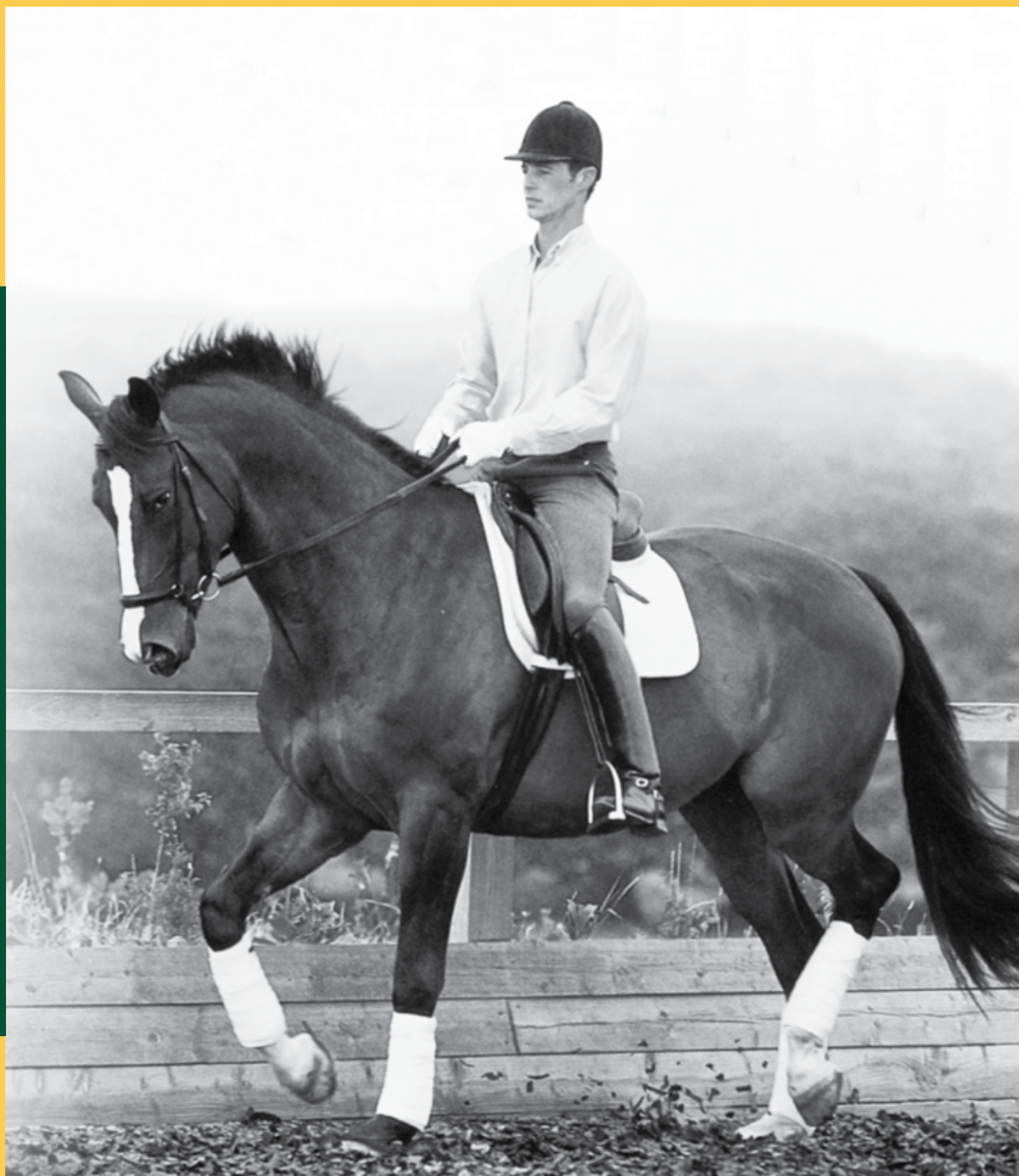


HOW TO BE A TRAINER (PART 15) DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 5)

By Dr. Mohamed Elsherbini





▲ Allow the horse to stretch his head & neck, and then ride him on the bit again. If sent on correctly, the horse will not change his centre of gravity

I must say that it is unusual to be writing this article after the January 25th revolution with all of the changes it has brought! Nevertheless our subject today is "Riding on the Bit" which is one of the keys to correct jumping.

DEFINITION:

The horse is said to be **on the bit** when it is working happily on the contact, and is accepting the rein aids with a steady and soft connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth both at the halt and in movement.

PREPARATION:

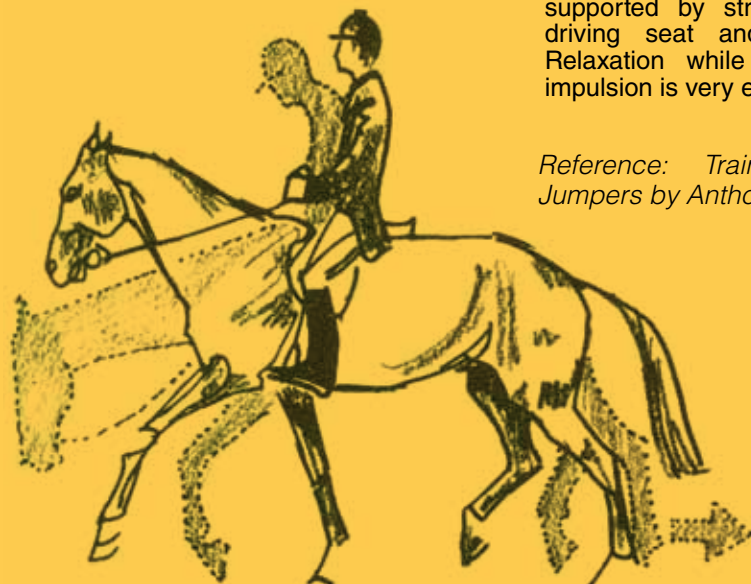
There is no problem in riding a horse **on the bit** - only a rider who starts **placing the head** too soon, and in an incorrect manner, will have difficulties. At first the horse should be able to carry the rider in balance, lower his head and neck to use his back, and be able to move his own four legs in all paces on a complete loose rein without losing balance or increasing his speed. If the horse is not able to do this he will, when asked to go on the bit, use the rider's hand as a **fifth leg**. The horse must be flexible naturally in neck and ribs and engage his inner hock on both sides.

AIDS:

The horse is taught to go on the bit only when his muscles are warmed up at the end of a session, as there is less chance of resistance. During preparation one should make many transitions from a variety of paces, sending the horse forward. A slight alternate side-ways turn of the wrist in rhythm with the horse's step will be

sufficient to encourage the horse to fix his lower jaw.

The first attempt to ride the horse on the bit should be made during a transition from walk to a halt. While at a halt the rider maintains adequate seat and leg aids and instead of letting the reins slip through the hands (first rein aid) or following the mouth down and forwards (second rein aid) when the horse flexes his jaw, the immediate reaction of the rider should be to ease his hands for a few seconds and then tighten them again (third rein aid) - similar to **squeezing a sponge**. If the rider has **dead hands**, the horse's mouth will also become **dead** very soon. The frequent changes from collection to relaxation will make the horse more flexible and ensure that he



▲ If the horse is not sent on sufficiently, he might come on to the forehand

accepts collection without stiffening and resistance.

PRECAUTIONS:

Effortless acceptance of the horse for collection is monitored by his acceptance to being ridden forward on the bit whilst taking the next points into consideration:

1. For a young horse, it is dangerous to go on the bit for long sessions every day. Three times a week is enough to avoid jamming his sensitive parotid gland between the jaw bone and the jowl.
2. If the horse responds willingly to halting on the bit, move forward a few strides at a walk while maintaining the horse on the bit. This should be followed by the first rein aid.
3. Don't start your third rein aid without good preparation for the horse's muscles in a relaxed manner. Never use **dead hands**.
4. The horse's poll should always be the highest point of the arched neck and the nose should be slightly in front of the vertical line.
5. The danger of **losing impulsion** is a serious mistake while applying the third rein aid (riding on the bit). The frequent lowering of the head and neck could bring the horse too much on the forehand if impulsion is lost and if the horse is not supported by strong forward driving seat and leg aids. Relaxation while maintaining impulsion is very essential. ☺

Reference: *Training Show Jumpers* by Anthony Paalman