

DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 9)

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DURING MY 1983 VISIT TO NEW MARKET, THE ENGLISH TOWN SPECIALISING IN HORSE RACING, I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE RACE HORSES PERFORMING THEIR MORNING FLAT WORK WITH **FLYING CHANGES** BEFORE PRACTICING THEIR DAILY RUN! I ASKED THE RACE HORSE TRAINERS THERE ABOUT TRAINING THOSE HORSES EVEN ON THE FLAT AND TEACHING THE FLYING CHANGES. THE ANSWER FROM ALL TRAINERS WAS THE SAME: CONTROL, OBEDIENCE, SUPPLENESS AND SAVING TIME IN CORNERS! I HAD TO ASK AGAIN, HOW DO FLYING CHANGES SAVE TIME IN CORNERS? AGAIN,

THE ANSWER WAS THE SAME: YOU MAY LOSE SECONDS IN A RACE IF THE HORSE DOESN'T MAKE A FLYING CHANGE IN ONE CORNER; WITHOUT IT HE MIGHT SLOW DOWN A LITTLE OR TURN WIDE FOR RE-BALANCING HIMSELF.

COUNTER CANTER:

This is defined as a cantering with the wrong lead on purpose. For

example, cantering with the left lead on the right hand and vice versa.

The horse should keep his left canter in spite of turning to the right with his body kept flexed to the left against the direction he is going.

The aids for counter canter, if riding a left canter and going to the right are the aids to keep the horse from changing his lead to right canter or disuniting the pace. A strong seat and leg aids to maintain left canter are applied. The rider's weight is more on his right seat bone, his left leg is on the girths maintaining

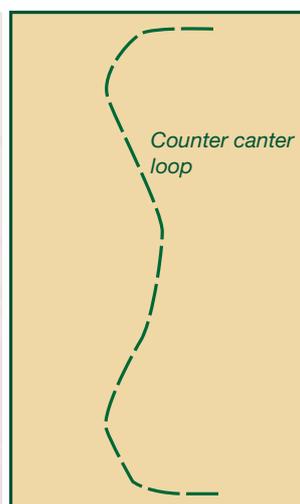


Fig. 1-A

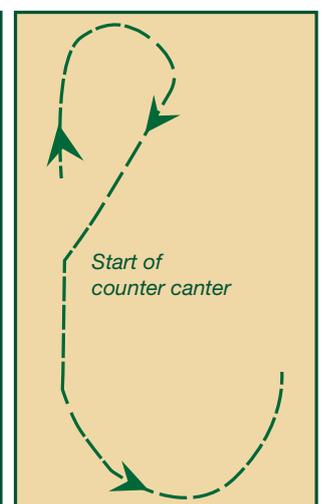


Fig. 1-B

Fig. 2 Flying Change from easier to more difficult positions

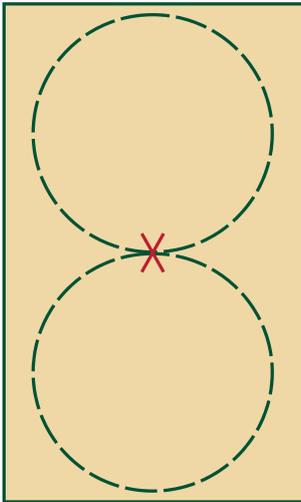


Fig. 2 A

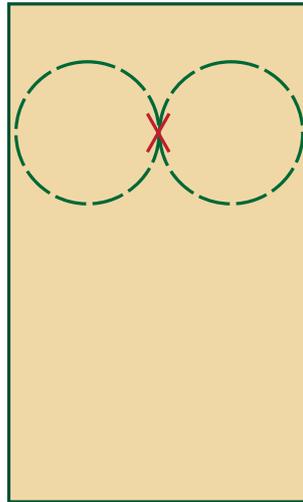


Fig. 2 B

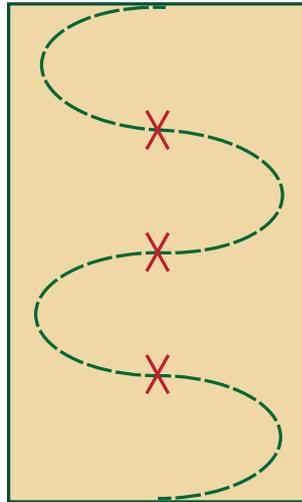


Fig. 2 C

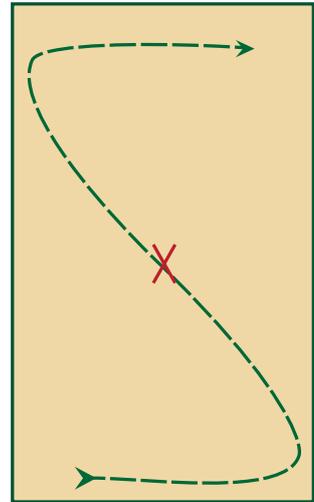


Fig. 2 D

impulsion, and the right leg is more behind the girths than usual to keep the flexion. The inside rein should be stronger than the outside one which guides the horse when turning.

The counter canter should be trained in an easy way first (Fig. 1–A), then in a more difficult way (Fig. 1–B). It is a great **suppling** exercise for the horse. It will also teach him obedience, balance, and straightness. A rider who is trained with his horse to perform a well balanced counter canter should not panic when cutting a corner during a course in counter canter as they will jump the next fence correctly. On the other side if the horse is not trained to do a counter canter (or a flying change), he may turn disunited which is a problem when facing big fences. Counter canter is a very good preparation for flying change.

FLYING CHANGE:

It is the change from one canter lead to the other while maintaining canter stride. It is a **natural movement** that horses do when they are free in nature to rebalance themselves in turns.

The aid for flying change is the same as for a strike off to **canter from trot**.

Before teaching the horse flying change, he must be able to achieve some collection in canter and be happy in counter canter.

As a preparation for the flying change, a rider should practice with his horse the **simple change** of the leg in canter with only one or two walking strides in between them.

The correct moment of flying change aids is when the **leading foreleg touches the ground**, as the next phase is the moment of **suspension** when all legs are free of the ground.

Start always in an easy position of the arena (Fig. 2 A, B, C, D).

For example, when the rider needs to make a flying change from left to right canter, the horse should be prepared with half-halts when his near forefoot touches the ground. The rider, simultaneously, should change his leg position and weight distribution and apply aids for **right canter**. The rider should keep his weight above the horse's near hind leg and apply increased pressure with the left leg slightly further behind the girths with strong pressure from the right leg on the girths.

It is essential to keep the horse **straight** from head to tail, maintaining collection, impulsion, balance, rhythm and be light on the bit.

A usual mistake is the **rider bending** his upper body forward looking down to the off foreleg putting more weight on it. Another common mistake is to execute flying changes too often at the same point of school so that the horse will anticipate it rather than respond to the aids.

It is very important that a show jumper can make a fluent and quick flying change to alter his direction in a course and especially in a jump-off saving valuable seconds.

I always believe that **riders win competitions in between jumps and not over them**. If I continue writing about flat work for jumping, I think I will never stop, but in my opinion what I have written in the last few issues about **dressage for jumping** is quite enough even for an international show jumper. 🐾

Now it is time to move to poles, grids, and introduction to jumping in the next issues of HORSE TIMES.