

THE ART OF CLASSICAL DRESSAGE RIDING

HOW CAN I COMPETE IN DRESSAGE?

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I GET ASKED THIS QUESTION A LOT, WHICH IS A VERY SIMPLE QUESTION BUT THE ANSWER IS A VERY LONG STORY.

IN THE EARLY STAGES OF LEARNING TO RIDE, YOU SHOULD HAVE CONCENTRATED ON ACQUIRING A BALANCED SEAT AND THE USE OF SIMPLE AIDS. HAVING LEARNED TO CONTROL YOUR BODY DESPITE WHATEVER THE HORSE MAY DO; IT IS NOW TIME TO FORM A CLOSER PARTNERSHIP WITH HIM SO THAT YOU WORK TOGETHER IN HARMONY.

THE HORSE

An experienced schoolmaster horse can teach you far more about riding than you could learn from any instructor or book. Since his influence on your progress is so strong, the importance of leaning on a **well-trained** horse cannot be stressed too strongly. The saying (old horses for young riders, old riders for young horses) is invariably proved right, provided you take (old) to mean experienced.

The horse need not have a perfect action or confirmation provided he is in sound condition, but he must have a calm temperament, and be willing and obedient. If he has been correctly trained to answer to the aids, you will be able to put into practice all that you have been taught up to this stage of your riding.

The better the confirmation of the horse, the easier he will find it to use himself efficiently and the more likely he is to be supple, loose and flexible. **For instance**, if he is built to carry too much of his weight on his forehead, his hocks will trail behind him, spoiling his paces. By comparison, **the well-balanced horse** will be (light on hand), moving freely from the shoulder, thus giving you a more comfort ride.

At this stage of your riding the horse must have impulsion. This is not speed, but controlled power.

(Freedom and control) may sound contradictory but freedom as applied to the horse's movement, means that he is using himself with maximum facility and minimum effort. To do so, he must be energetic, propelling himself forward strongly, unrestricted by tension in his muscles.

Your sensitive use of the aids will depend on the responsiveness of your mount and the way in which he has been trained. If you are not able to buy your own horse, choose a school which can provide you with horses that have been schooled to a high standard, and which are not overworked.

Horses used in constant school work soon become stale, however well trained they may be. A horse which is numb to the aids will not provide you with the sensitive (feel) you need, to develop as a rider. However, it may be possible to restore the horse's sensitivity and enjoyment in his work by using clear and consistent aids that he will understand and respect, making the constant nagging he has come to expect from a succession of learners no longer necessary.

That speech was about the horse, next will be about you and keep in your mind all the time that our main target is to (Tango) with your lovely partner. 🐾

Ref, (Captain Mark Phillips)