

Centre Line



KZN DRESSAGE NEWSLETTER

MARCH / APRIL 2011

Kzn Dressage Website – www.kzndressage.co.za

Newsletter information : nadinep@sos.co.za

EVENTS TO DIARISE

ESP Championship Dressage 5th & 6th March 2011 - Durban Shongweni Club.

Schedule available on the KZNHS & KZN Dressage Websites.

SANEF Schools 19 – 21 March 2011 at Canterbury PMB. Schedule available on the Sanef Schools Website.

Dargle Dressage Group – 27 March 2011 at Lions River Club. Schedule available on the KZNHS & KZN Dressage websites.

Judges Seminar, 19th March - Anita Adendroff will be conducting a Seminar for all judges and learner judges on the 12th March, starting at 9 am at D77 Summerveld, Pam Cromptons Arena.

Shongweni Shows – 02nd & 3rd April at Durban Shongweni Club. Watch KZNHS Website for entries.

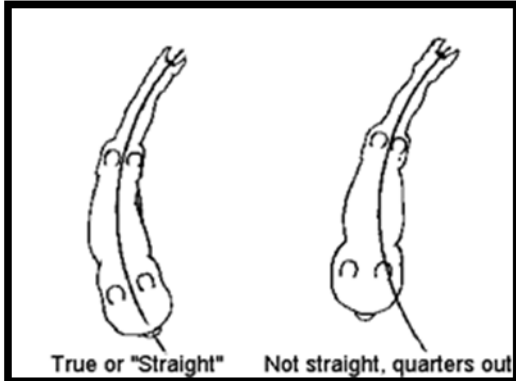
HITS, TIPS AND COMMENTS - The Magic of the Outside Rein

After recently running a few "Pony Club" workshops and judging at Sanef Schools it has become very evident that many of our new-comers and Prelim and Novice Riders do not ride Circles Correctly. I hope that this article will be of some assistance in improving the quality of the circles ridden in Dressage Tests.

Once the rider has control of the horse using legs, seat and hands. They need to learn to make correct use of it. The rider needs to do exercises to supple and strengthen the horse. Leave the horse long while you do these exercises. As the horse gets stronger, he will, in due course, offer the jaw to the rider, and go 'on the bit'. The horse's spine is stiff by nature, therefore bending the spine is difficult. However with consistent training the horse

can be made to be supple. With each exercise we must always ask ourselves: "What am I going to achieve?" Exercises must be executed properly otherwise they do not improve the horse at all and are of no value. To build some logic in the exercises we must each time establish the goal - the finished product. In this exercise - **the circle** - the goal is that the horse is bent according to the arc of the circle.

Straight and True:



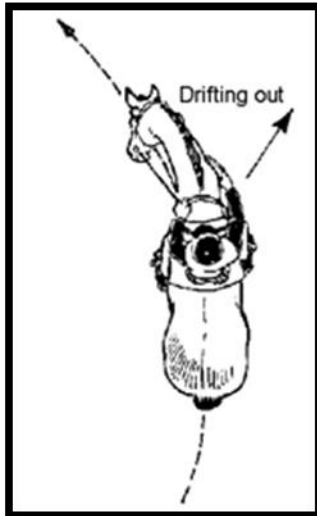
A horse is straight when his hind and front legs are behind one another in one line. The horse is true when he is bent according to the arc of the circle. We are able to draw a line through the horse and the outside legs are on the outside of this line and the inside legs on the inside. The rider must try to make the horse bend according to the arc of the circle. The stiff horse will usually swing the quarters out. This can be seen from the ground; the inside hindleg crosses in front of the outside hindleg.

Most riders, without access to proper instruction, turn the horse like a bicycle on a circle. They pull on the inside rein and push the outside rein forward. Some even push the inside rein over the withers to the other side. Although the horse is often looking in the direction of the turn, his body is going the other way. He pushes over the shoulder away from the direction the rider wants to go. This often happens if the rider wants to turn away from a group of horses but finishes amongst them. This all happens because these riders have not discovered: **The magic of the outside rein.**

To turn the horse correctly we must adhere to this Golden Rule: Our hands must always be level. The hands must never be behind one another. Our contact will also be even. Turning the horse must go as follows: Let us say that we want to turn right. With the hands level, we take the right 'inside' hand away from the central position to the right. This in turn will take the head and neck a little to the right. The horse will follow his nose and turn with such a simple request. Our hands are level, therefore the left (outside) rein becomes a little too short as it were, and becomes firmer on neck and starts to push. Now there are two reins saying the same thing. The left rein firmly on the neck will have a limiting effect: It prevents the horse drifting out over the shoulder. The opening of the rein while maintaining contact with the outside with even hands can always be reverted to when the rider is in trouble. The nice part about this way of training is that there is no force involved. It is a pleasant request and the horse will have complete willingness to obey. All horses have a good side and a bad side. The majority of horses are more supple to the left and stiff to the right. The fact is that we cannot let this stiffness remain. When we ride the circles, we encounter problems both ways. Let's assume our horse is stiff to the right. Although we are using the right technique the horse will fall to the centre of the circle. It does not work because the horse does not want to bend the body to the right and support himself with his inside (right) hindleg. We overcome this problem by making little facets. Make a little turn, then a straight line, another little turn again... and so



on. When we make many little turns, we don't give the horse the opportunity to overbalance and fall to the centre. After a while the horse will become more supple and stronger, and we can continue on the circle.



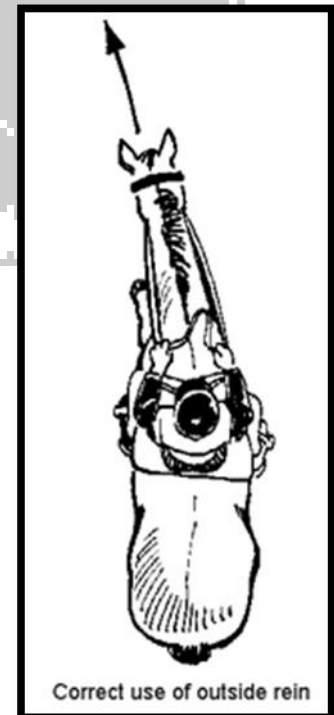
To the left is a difficult problem, the horse wants to overbend (make a bend in his neck). He is bending his neck but not his body. This causes him to drift to the outside over the right shoulder. Now we must put the limiting effect of the outside rein into effect. The rider must close the outside elbow into the body and push his outside (right) hand towards the centre of the horse. The rider may also make half halts with the outside rein. He makes little squeezes with his right hand as the right front leg goes forwards and stops when the desired result is achieved. This is a simple way of riding our circles. The novice rider should start this simple exercise and progress from here. Just to keep an even contact left and right is not as simple as it sounds! As the rider progresses she will have to use all the tools she has available. Reins, legs and seat. Let's analyse what effect each of these have on the performance of the horse.

Reins:

We looked at the outside rein as a limiting rein, but it can also push the horse sideways. Anything that gets pushed won't slow down. Now we look how it is possible to ride a circle without the use of the inside rein; but mainly on the 'pushing- power' of the outside rein. Close the outside elbow onto the body, keep the hands low as we want to push the horse's body over. With a low hand the rein has an effect on the shoulder. We don't worry if the horse does not look in the direction of the turn yet, but mostly they do even though we are not asking anything with the inside rein.

Legs:

A stiff horse does not want to bend his spine. He will swing the quarters out and doesn't want to place his inside hindleg under his centre of gravity. To prevent the horse from swinging the hindquarters out the rider must place his outside leg a little behind the girth. The inside leg must not slide forward. It must stay at the girth. At the girth means that the rider's lower leg and heels are under his seatbones and head. His legs are placed in the centre of the horse which is some 20 cms behind the position of the girth of the saddle. Confusing, isn't it? I prefer to say; the inside leg is in the centre of the horse. The inside leg is at that point so the horse can bend around it, and it is 'there' that the rider's leg supports the inside hindleg of the horse. The inside hindleg of the horse must be activated to make him step more forward and therefore it encourages him to take his hip forward. When the horse swings the quarters out a lot, the rider must be active with his outside leg (behind the girth) and tap the horse quite firmly in the rhythm of the outside hindleg of the horse. The inside



leg must not be forgotten however, otherwise the horse will make a circle with his quarters in. The rider must play the firmness or the massaging effect of his legs at each moment.

Seat:

When the rider sits correctly the horse will position himself under him correctly. Once more we look at our goal: The horse must be bent according to the arc of the circle from his tail to the poll. If the horse is bending correctly we will be able to draw a line throughout his hips and shoulders and they will converge in the centre of the circle. The inside hip of the horse is forward and the inside shoulder is back. Our body must follow the body of the horse! Our inside hip should be forward. If we sit correctly the horse will try to find harmony with us. He will also take his inside hip forward. When the rider puts his inside hip forward correctly he will increase the weight on his inside seatbone. This increased weight, another seat aid, will also encourage the inside leg to step more under and take the hip forward. The rider's shoulders must follow the shoulders of the horse. The rider does that when he looks in the direction of the turn, no more is needed. By looking he will know if he is going in the right direction but, it will also place him correctly in the saddle. This again, will make the task of turning easier. The activity of our legs in their correct position, our weight distribution, the position of our hips and looking in the right direction (which has an effect on our shoulders), the pushing effect of the outside rein, all helps to turn the horse.:

From Behind Forwards.

Now let us talk about the inside rein. We don't need it anymore for steering except when we are in trouble. We use the inside rein for flexion. Flexion is bend at the poll, whereas bend is throughout the body. Flexion makes the horse look in the direction of the movement. When on a curved track the horse must always be flexed and bent onto the circle. Flexion we achieve with the inside rein. Bend we achieve with the outside rein, leg position and their activity, and the correct seat. To achieve flexion we raise our inside hand a little while keeping the inside rein against the neck. The inside rein must stay on the neck otherwise a sideways curl may develop in the neck. The horse must not place his head too much to the side or he loses balance. Flexion and bend throughout the horse is what we seek to achieve, not a break in the base of the neck. A horse with difficulty accepting the bend will make it difficult for us to stay in the correct position. He will push our outside hand, our outside hip and shoulder forward. We are, as it were, twisting off the horse. The rider must in this case correct his position every two strides. Remember, if the rider sits correctly, the horse must work correctly. He can't do it wrong! Without force we are making the horse work correctly. The magic of the outside rein is its limiting and pushing effect. In the trot, being a diagonal pace, the activity of the inside leg will connect with the outside front leg and this energy will flow into the outside rein. (The same will happen in the canter). It can be appreciated that if the outside rein is too allowing the horse will push himself onto a larger circle. By resisting this outward push with a limiting rein, the horse will go on a curved track. When we ride the horse from behind forward he will always be true, and we truly start to ride the horse.

SANEF Schools Dressage

Qualifier 1

Well done to all the Junior and Pony Riders who competed in the SANEF Schools Qualifier 1 in Durban at the end of January. Many of the children and Junior riders at this event were new to the discipline and many were competing in their first ever "Dressage Show". There were approximately 30 Junior and Pony rider competitors all trying their hand at dressage.

Rechay Grey	and	Brandenburg Sabanna
Shannon Fogden	and	Royal Saga
Micaela Brun	and	Tanga
Adele Howell-Pryce	and	King Zenith
Lara Kemlo	and	Bullion Boy
Michelle Rumney	and	Sandawana
Karine Bisset	and	Fortune Time
Heidi Wood	and	Riverales Charisma
Elzabe Coetzee	and	Galloie
Melissa J. Boulind	and	Lagoon

FEEDBACK and NEWS and LETTERS

In an initiative by the KZN Dressage Committee to promote and grow the sport, **Dressage.Go** has agreed to run the "Ride & Go" programme every 2nd Wednesday at the Durban Shongweni Club from the 02 March starting at 1.00pm and finishing at 5:00pm. There will be no placing or prize money. Your test will be judged by a qualified judge. Eventers and eventing tests, para dressage riders/test and Showjumpers Welcome. See the Kzn Dressage Website for more information or contact Rechay Grey on 0768194799.



Reach for the Stars / Universe : The KZN Dressage Committee is still running the 'Reach for the Universe' and 'Reach for the Stars' development program so any Juniors or Pony Riders upgrading from Novice to elementary or elementary to EM etc need to email Nadine on nadinep@sos.co.za.

Grow Grand Prix Boot Camp with Natalie Hobday.

Feedback By Sue Horne

I had the privilege of riding at the first Boot Camp in Gauteng at Kyalami Equestrian Park. After some challenge of getting my horse to Johannesburg I decided to "Just put him in the two berth and go". There were approximately 25 horses registered to ride and two of us travelled up from KZN. Catherine Berning was lucky enough to have a horse already in Johannesburg which she could ride on the clinic.

The format took a different form to the normal clinics which have been run in the past. The first day was as an assessment of the horse and riders capabilities at the level chosen by the rider. Natalie sat in the judge's box and commented into a mike about the test. The test was not actually judged in the conventional way. The tests were videoed and Natalie's commentary recorded. Each rider was then given their DVD later in the evening to go home and watch before the lesson the next day. The riders were required to wear full show attire and present themselves as if they were at an actual show. Unfortunately the two KZN riders (me being one) , lost the plot completely and had not read one of the emails properly which stated this. A lesson well learnt!

In the evening Natalie was given the opportunity to present to everyone her findings. Natalie remarked on the general self carriage and engagement of the hindquarters. This obviously comes for impulsion and energy without riding fast and out of rhythm. Another important point was the connection being equal on both reins. Natalie also found that people were not paying sufficient attention to the directives on the test next to each movement. Accuracy of the movements was also a concern. Lastly Natalie said that we do not use the corners sufficiently to help set up elasticity.

As Natalie has a degree in Sports Physiology, she also had a couple of slides on this subject. This gave a different perspective to the preparation of riding Dressage tests. The next two days consisted of a training session for each person. As the numbers were so great there was only time for each person to have one session. Natalie concentrated on improving on the test which was previously ridden. Natalie indicated to me that my horse, Asterix, could basically do all of the work and did not have any real problems. All he needed was to be in more self carriage with expression and impulsion. Natalie then spent the next 45 minutes showing me how to begin to achieve this. I also had this whole session videoed which I watched that evening. While I was in Johannesburg I entered the show that weekend. Asterix certainly felt more energetic and balanced and we finished second with a score of 64%. I videoed this test as well to compare against the assessment test.

The KZN Dressage Committee is discussing with the Grow Dressage Committee to bring one of these boot camps to KZN and several different instructors will be conducting boot camps throughout the year. This is a very exciting initiative and I encourage everyone to get involved with the aim to uplift the sport of Dressage in South Africa. *Sue Horne*

