12-12-2011 WB

The SCALE OF TRAINING and its use for the Judge

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Dressage Judges generally have two main functions:

- To **decide the ranking** of a class by giving marks (in combination with helpful comments and explanations)
- To **check, influence and secure the correct training and presentation** of a dressage horse, following the Rules of the FEI and the prescriptions in the Handbook, especially of the "Scale of Training".

→ A judge has to recognize immediately whether the Scale of Training has been fulfilled correctly

BUT: In addition to the Scale of Training, other criteria have to be considered, such as:

- Technical mistakes of any kind
- The general submission of the horse
- The correctness of the lines
- The overall picture

The Scale of Training

1. Rhythm:

Clear beat and regularity in the three basic paces of the horse

Walk:
Four-beat rhythm, the horse's feet following one another. "V-position" of lateral pairs of legs must be clearly recognizable

Mistakes: Loss of Rhythm
- One lateral pair of legs shifts more ad more into parallelism until getting almost ambling. Between a correct four-beat and an almost lateral two-beat many transitional phases are possible.
- "Short- long" is also considered a loss of rhythm.

Guidance for scoring of walk:
- When the walk is (almost) lateral or clearly short/ long over a ***considerable*** distance, it can **never get a sufficient mark (< 5)**. Also the collective mark for the **regularity of paces** has to be clearly diminished.
- If the walk loses its rhythm only ***slightly*** or ***temporarily*** - e.g. in corners or after transitions - the judge has to give a lower mark only for this walk.
  The collective mark for the **regularity of paces** must also be **slightly diminished.**
- Loss of rhythm ***in a movement*** - e.g. in a walk pirouette or in a simple change of leg - leads to a lower mark for the movement itself and - maybe - for **submission**, but **not** for the **regularity of paces**.

Apart from the rhythm the mark is influenced by activity, suppleness in the back, contact, variety of the length of steps

Trot:
Two beat-rythm, each diagonal pair of legs moves simultaneously with a moment of suspension in between.

Mistakes: Loss of Rhythm
- Lameness
- Unevenness
- Short loss of balance
  - being overridden
  - lack of suppleness

Guidance for scoring of trot:
- Clear lameness: immediate **elimination** → for the sake of the horse!!
- Unevenness: The mark for each movement with uneven steps **cannot be higher than five**; additionally the collective mark for the **regularity of paces** has to be diminished.
- Short loss of balance *within a movement* → only a lower mark for the movement concerned but no reduction of the collective mark for **regularity of paces.**

Apart from the rhythm the judge has to look for impulsion, elasticity of the steps, cadence, balance and self-carriage in all tempi, suppleness in the back, uphill tendency, contact, variety of the length of steps.

Canter:
Canter is a jumping pace in a clear three-beat rhythm with a moment of suspension after the three beats.

Mistakes: Loss of Rhythm
- "Rolling" canter with no moment of suspension
- If in the diagonal phase the foreleg touches the ground before the diagonal hind leg does, the horse shows a four- beat which normally also leads to a downhill tendency of the horse and/ or to crookedness.

Guidance for scoring of canter:
- ***Consistently*** four-beat canter → as a symptom of a broken pace:
  No satisfactory mark for the canter movement(s) is possible **(< 6)**, collective mark for **regularity** must be diminished.
- Four-beat only shown ***within a movement*** - e.g.counter-canter or half pass:
  Only a low mark for the movement itself; no reduction of the collective mark for regularity but a lower mark for **submission** (= loss of balance)

Apart from the rhythm the judge has to look for impulsion, elasticity of the strides, cadence, balance and self-carriage in all tempi, suppleness in the back, uphill tendency, contact, variety of the length of strides

When judging dressage tests the regularity of paces is the main criterion on all levels and must be the first to be checked!!!

2. Suppleness:
The horse must move in all three basic paces without any kind of tension.

How to check suppleness:
- Poll/ neck: Elastic, flexible to both sides
- Back: Elastic, swinging, rider can sit comfortably.
- Tail: Swinging, not carried too high or too low, not swishing, not crooked.
- Joints: Supple, smooth steps, you hardly hear the horse move
- Mouth: Active mouth with foam, chewing the bit
- Ears, eyes, face: **Does the horse look a happy athlete?**

Mistakes:
- Nervous, tense, disobedient,
- Back not swinging, stiff
- Swishing tail
- Stiff poll and neck
- Ears always angrily behind, very unhappy face of the horse
- Permanently grinding teeth

Guidance for scoring of suppleness:
A lack of suppleness must reduce the marks for the movements concerned very significantly.
If these mistakes are shown ***repeatedly*** also the collective mark for **submission** has to be diminished.

3. Contact
The correct contact is a steady but light connection between the rider's hand and the mouth of the horse which can only be achieved if the horse is really relaxed and supple.

How to check a correct contact:
- The horse must accept the bit and chew confidentially
- He must always follow the rider´s hands
- Supple poll; noseline should never be behind the vertical
- The contact should be steady but nevertheless light

Mistakes:
- Open mouth, dead mouth, no acceptance of the bridle
- Tongue above the bit, drawn up, slightly visible
- Tongue clearly hanging out on one side
- Horse is not accepting the bit, is behind/ on/ above, against the bit
- Noseline behind the vertical, neck overbent (tight and/ or deep), tilted neck
- Unsteady neck, tossing up and down

Guidance for scoring of contact:
If the horse
- does not at all accept the bit
- is above, against, heavily on, or clearly behind the bit
- shows strong resistance against the rider's hands

no sufficient marks for the technical movements concerned are possible.
- If the tongue is clearly sidewards out of the mouth **two points** must be deducted from the mark for each movement concerned. **In this case the mark cannot be higher than f i v e.**

If one of those mistakes is ***repeatedly*** or ***permanently*** shown, also the collective mark for **submission** must be seriously diminished.

If the horse is behind the vertical only ***for a short moment***, not blocked in the hindlegs and without resistance against the rider's hands, the technical mark for this movement and the collective mark for **submission** will not be so seriously affected.

4. Impulsion

Impulsion is the transmission of the energy, generated from the hindlegs, through an elastic and swinging back, into an athletic powerful movement with a clear uphill tendency. Impulsion is only possible in trot- and cantermovements.

How to check impulsion:
- The horse moves willingly forward with energy and engagement of hindquarters, gaining expression in paces
- Hocks must work forward-upward
- Swinging, elastic back
- The groundcover in extensions is increased, no change of tempo
- Increase of elasticity of steps/ strides, moment of suspension in collection is more pronounced → lightness of shoulders

Mistakes:
- Dragging hindlegs, lack of activity, nearly slow motion, wrong "passage-like" steps
- Hocks only work upward
- Stiff in the back
- Flat or hurried extensions, limited groundcover
- without elasticity and uphill tendency
- Change or loss of cadence

Guidance for scoring of impulsion:
- If extensions are shown as ***flat*** and/ or ***hurried*** paces without any elasticity and uphill tendency
- If collection lacks energy and engagement from behind but is misunderstood as "***slow motion***", as a ***"passage-like"*** movement
- If the horse is tense in the back

the mark for the technical movements must be clearly diminished.
In these cases the collective mark for **impulsion** must also be reduced.

For high marks in extensions the difference between medium and extended tempo must be clearly recognizable, in combination with well balanced and elastic transitions, always uphill and with active hind legs.

5. Straightness / Bend

Straightening a horse means keeping him healthy by working against his natural crookedness

How to check straightness:
- The horse is able to move on both reins on one track, on straight and on curved lines
- The horse is able to bend on both reins
- The horse uses his hindlegs equally
- The contact is even on both reins

Mistakes:
- The horse cannot be kept straight
  The horse remains stiff on one side, does not bend on curved lines → escaping quarters
- The horse cannot bend in lateral work

Guidance for scoring of straightness/ bend:

- If a horse does not bend on a curved line and if his hind legs do not follow the track of the forelegs,
- if a horse is not clearly bent in lateral movements (shoulder-in, half passes, travers or renvers) or pirouettes
- if a horse clearly moves on two tracks

the mark for the movements concerned must be clearly reduced.
If a horse is **repeatedly** stiff or crooked, also the collective mark for **submission** must be diminished.

To get a satisfactory/ good mark for zig-zag-half passes the horse must - in addition - equally be bent to both sides.

6. Collection

The aim of collection is to develop and improve the balance of the horse. Pushing power is more and more transferred into carrying power → The centre of gravity is shifted further backwards → Uphill tendency, lightness of the forehand.
The highest degree of collection is needed in piaffe, passage, and canter pirouettes.
For a correct collection, all preceding criteria of the "Scale of Training" must be fulfilled.

How to check collection:

- The hindlegs are intensively bent and carry more weight.
- Improve of self-carriage and balance
- The neck is raised and arched - related to the degree of collection. The poll is the highest point
- The horse gives the impression of moving uphill
- The steps/ strides become shorter but activity and impulsion are sustained
- The quality of the paces get improved

Mistakes:

- Hindlegs do not carry, the croup remains high
- Lack of self-carriage and balance
- The neck is long and flat, the horse tries to keep his balance with the neck
- The horse leans on the bit
- Downhill tendency
- Steps and strides are not elevated but short and stiff
- The hindlegs too much under the horse shortens the base of support and can impede the movement

Guidance for scoring of collection:

- If a horse is not showing any of the criteria requested in collected movements, no sufficient marks for the movements concerned are possible.
- If the horse lacks collection ***repeatedly*** or ***continuously,*** also the collective mark for **submission** must be significantly reduced.

For being able to give high marks, the judge must have the impression that all movements are executed without any effort.
The horse should not need visible support of the rider, all aids should appear absolutely invisible.
Even the most difficult movements have to give the impression of supreme ease.

All items of the Training Scale are components of the Collective Marks. Therefore the judges have to check the elements of the Scale of Training before giving the collectives.

A dressage judge's greatest duty and responsibility is always to evaluate whether a horse has been trained in the right way and to tell major from minor mistakes in his judging.

This survey does not claim to contain each detail about judging dressage tests and can only be seen in connection with the remarks made during the seminar.