

## *June 2007 Beyond the Basics* *Lesson Plans to Accomplish Together- Part III*

Recently I had the opportunity to travel into the central part of Oregon to evaluate a horse that could possibly work well into the family of several of my clients. She was a beautiful Hispano-Arab, who had been clearly well cared-for, and was happy to do her work as it had been presented to her so far in her seven years of life. It had been a long time since I was in this situation, where I was a third-person observer and hands-on evaluation didn't happen until later in the session. Most of the time when I am asked to evaluate a horse, it is on my home territory, with my favorite tools at hand. (i.e. Round pen, lariat, lunge & dressage whip, flag, bridge, car wash, etc.!) Here I found myself watching, listening, examining (both horse and human) to discover the level of communication and understanding. In this process of observation I was again drawn to the importance and purpose of this series of articles...*Develop a set of lesson plans to accomplish together as horse and rider that lead the team to a higher level of understanding, partnership, and unity.* It so critical that we recognize the tremendous responsibility we have to provide leadership, with clarity and consistency, in order to achieve this ultimate goal of brilliant communication.

This month, as you add even more exercises to your 3-5 Day Lesson Plan, I'd like you think about four important areas or qualities that prepare us and the horse to develop this effortless communication. I see them as four questions I ask myself before, during, and after the ride to help me determine if I am on the right path to providing leadership:

**Mental Preparation:** Is my mind in the right place, in the present moment, and ready to interact with my horse? Have I clearly decided what today's exercises will be, and know why I am accomplishing them, how to set them up, and what I will reward as successful movement and behavior? (Note: In this question I have a challenge for each of you...Begin to develop your library of printed and video information. Start studying the master horsemen of old and some aspiring horsemen of present. Become a scholar of horsemanship! You will find a suggested reading list in the T&T Horsemanship Workbook, and a partial list at the end of this article.) Finally, is my horse mentally prepared, and am I ready to watch his eyes and ears to recognize that I have him mentally *with me*?

**Physical Preparation:** Have I prepared my core area – stomach, back, ribcage – to develop a “positive tension” that enables me to flow with my horse's movement, without being stiff? On the opposite side, watching that in my desire to be supple that I don't become a noodle! Am I flexible in the neck, shoulders, torso, hip, knee, and ankles and have I warmed all those body parts up? Have I checked my horse out physically by watching him move at liberty, by doing some basic and focused ground work, and with supple maneuvers on board?



**Emotional Fitness:** What is going on in my mind, in my body, in my life that will affect my attitude during this training session? How will I approach today's lesson...With a smile on my face and ready to reward the slightest try, or as a demanding drill sergeant? Have I asked my horse where his emotions are today? So often behaviors that seem to be related to the horse's emotions and attitude, have their root in the physical well-being. I know if my back is hurting it is hard for me to approach my work and schooling in a happy receptive manner.



**Spiritual Health:** This is a hard quality to discuss, because we lack the words to describe adequately the feeling I am trying to portray. I am not talking about spirituality in a religious definitions. It is this deep personal connection, fostered by understanding and appreciation of the greater environment surrounding you, which allows you to be open to feeling *of*, *for*, and *with* your horse. This is where I believe the horse is our best teacher, in that he was never *disconnected* from his surroundings, so he acts, reacts, and interacts in a completely honest format. In our very busy world it is incredibly important that we slow down and connect daily with our personal spiritual health. So what's the question I ask myself to determine my spiritual preparedness...Have I taken a deep breath, become present and aware, and taken a moment to reflect on how incredibly lucky I am to have the horse in my life?

As you apply the lesson plans for this month, and combine them with previous suggestions, I hope you will begin each session by asking yourself the overarching question: Am I mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually prepared to be a good leader for my horse? Personally my answer is always...Not Quite! But as an "Aspiring Horseman" I will keep trying my very best, and thank God for the patience, forgiveness, and grace the horse gives to me everyday!

### Partial List of Resources

- 1) **Gymnastic Exercises for Horses – Vol. 1 & 2 by Eleanor Russell**
- 2) **The Handbook of Riding Essentials – by Francois Lemaire de Ruffieu**
- 3) **The Complete Training Horse and Rider – by Alois Podhajsky**
- 4) **Dressage – by Henry Wynmalen**
- 5) **Kinship with All Life – by J. Allen Boone**
- 6) **rue Unity by Tom Dorrance, Edited by Milly Hunt Porter**



## Here are your lesson plans for this month, to combine with last months specific exercises:

### Day One - Straight

#### Ground School:

Liberty work using surcingle, with light side rein contact, or reins drawn up thru the gullet of the western saddle & hooked around the horn, so that a light contact is made on the snaffle bit

#### Riding:

After your ground school and supple exercises on board: Begin to review your rating exercises, on both straight lines and circles, but now ask for a little more connection of the hind quarters driving forward, as the poll lifts, and the reins/hands have a very light contact with the mouth. The outside rein should be supportive, feeling for the tongue and requesting a longitudinal arch in the horse, and the inside rein should be active, also feeling for the tongue but releasing that feel when a slight lateral arch is achieved. You are striving for the beginnings of collection & engagement, with rhythm, balance, and straightness. Think of developing “carriage”, rather than a “frame”

### Day Two - Lateral

#### Ground School:

Review the steps of Work in Hand from last month, and add:

\* Shoulder-In on a square

\* Haunches-In from the track, to the diagonal (Half Pass)

#### Riding:

After supple exercises while riding: Begin a series of requests that combine the lateral maneuvers you have been practicing. Take particular care in thinking of and seeing the pattern in your minds-eye before each transition. (Riding will become increasingly geometric!)

Example: Start down the outside track traveling left; At the far corner of the longside, pick up a shoulder-in, and carry for 5 steps, then straighten; At the next long side corner, pick up a haunches-in, and carry for 5 steps; Now begin alternating 5 steps shoulder-in, straighten, 5 steps haunches-in & straighten; Next come down the quarter-line, and leg-yield on the diagonal to the wall. The possibilities are endless!

### Day Three Cowboy

#### Ground School:

Send your horse forward on a circle; Change the positioning of your energy to develop a Turn-on-Center, where you are leading the outside front foot of the horse on a forward arch, and your energy is flowing on an arch past his tail; The outside front foot reaches on the arch of a small circle, while his inside hind foot reaches under his body, in balance

#### Riding:

(Don't forget to practice last month's drills and supple exercises!) Accomplish the same pattern/maneuver on board as you did in your ground school (i.e. Balanced Turn-on-Center) The key is to keep all four quarters of the horse moving and reaching equally. Often times, as you make the circle smaller and smaller, the outside front foot declines to reach forward on that smaller arch. Keep the forward momentum with a little bump of your *outside* leg. When it feels smooth as glass, reward by softly riding out of the circle.

### Day Four

#### **Dressage**

Ground School: Your warm-up for ground school will first be warming up YOUR mind and body! Start on your two-leg horse, and ride the patterns you have been practicing work in hand. Pay particular attention to where your weight and balance needs to be to accomplish a leg yield posture, such as shoulder-in, as opposed to a half pass posture, such as a haunches-in.

Riding: After warm-up of utilizing previous straight and lateral day movements – Combine the training level tests from the past two articles, with some of the lateral movements, and write your own test! Take advantage of the long sides to throw in steps of shoulder-in, and when you find yourself on a quarter or center-line try a few steps of half pass. I highly recommend getting finding the book of USEF Dressage Tests, maybe even join the organization!

[www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org)  
[www.oregondressage.com](http://www.oregondressage.com)

**Day Five – Doma Vaquera  
Doma Vaquera Basico Test**

**A to B to D is the “Centerline”  
Note: School letters in Doma  
Vaquera are different than  
dressage**

1	A B C-D-E-F-G	Enter canter Halt at C (Judge Sits at D) Proceed working trot, Track right
2	G-B  At C  C-D-L	Track right, ¼ turn just shy of centerline Ride Figure 8, 1 <sup>st</sup> circle right – 2 <sup>nd</sup> circle to left Proceed track left, working trot
3	At L- E-K-to Centerline	Begin serpentine
4	At Centerline	Halt and backup 4 steps facing E-F
5	Centerline to F-G-B	Proceed at walk, track right
6	Between B & C	Figure 8, 1 <sup>st</sup> circle left – 2 <sup>nd</sup> right
7	Proceed C-D-F	Medium walk, track right
8	At F	Canter
9	F-H-A-I to J At J	Proceed working canter 10 meter circle right lead
10	Proceed J-K-L	Working canter right lead
11	At L Proceed L-D-E	Walk Working walk
12	At E	Begin serpentine to right
13	At J	10 meter circle left lead
	Proceed J-I-A-B-C At C	Working Canter Halt and backup 6 steps

