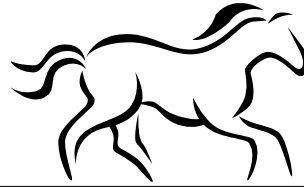




T & T Horsemanship



15477 Sky Ranch Lane
Haines, OR 97833
(541) 856-3356
Fax: (541) 856-3272
mail: tnthorse@eoni.com



tnthorsemanship.com

Eclectic Horseman Series 2009

Cantering with The 'Garrocha'...Believe, Balance, Beauty

I can picture it now...Eclectic Horseman readers riding under and around 13 foot-long poles as their neighbors shake their heads in disbelief! All of sudden you are seeing more and more Spanish flat-hats appear, and beautiful Spanish guitar music is filling the air. Hopefully you have discovered a new instrument to enhance your horsemanship skills, and in the process exposed yourself to the wonderful traditions of the true Doma Vaquera. Perhaps this experience has encouraged you to move on from working with the garrocha at the walk – in balance and rhythm – to experimenting with some of these maneuvers at the canter.

In preparation for canter work with the garrocha, there are several prerequisite skills that have severed me well in getting my horse ready to canter a small circle and eventually be able to accomplish a canter pirouette under the pole.

Pursuit of the Dressage Training Scale – It is critical that before you start to ask your horse to canter on this small circle, with a radius of less than 13 feet, that you prepare them for becoming rhythmic, balanced, engaged, and eventually collected. The previous articles in *Eclectic Horseman*, leading you through the reasoning and use of the Training Scale, should be required reading as you develop your horse and your mind and body to accomplish this athletic fete.

Lateral Work & Gymnastic Exercises – Not many of us humans would be capable of performing a ballet dance, with rhythm, timing, balance, and grace if we had not first invested months and years of study, gymnastic preparation, and most likely a fair measure of positive mental attitude! Sounds a lot like the pursuit of true horsemanship! In developing both horse and rider for maneuvers associated to cantering with the garrocha, it is critical that we gymnastically prepare. Exercises that free-up the shoulders and hips, that develop the muscles and attitude for self-carriage, and essentially enhance the diversity of jobs the horse/rider team is able to accomplish, will all lead to an ability to canter with the garrocha. (Note: Review articles by Alice on the subject at: www.tnthorsemanship.com/articles and read: *Gymnastic Exercises for Horses* by Eleanor Russell) In specific, you should be able to effortlessly flow your horse through lateral movements such as leg yields, shoulder-in, and half-pass postures. Stepping 'into' the bend in a half-pass shape, should be as easy as stepping 'away' from the bend in a leg-yield. (Another wonderful video series to which we can all aspire is: *Classical Dressage* by Philippe Karl)

Use of the Cavalletti – In order to artfully accomplish the canter with the garrocha, your horse must be balanced, rhythmic and truly 'coming from behind' with a good amount of engagement and the beginnings of collection. Using the ground rails or cavalletti will help your horse with all of these qualities. You don't have purchase anything fancy! Some fence poles, about 2.5 to 3-inches in diameter will work fine. Or combine your skills, and practice dragging small logs out to a mountain road and set up the distances to work on a great walk, trot, and eventually canter. (Just remember to remove the logs when you are done, in case a vehicle needs to get through!) In other words, use the environment to create situations where you horse gets to pick his feet up with rhythm, balance, and timing at various gaits. (Note: A good reference for this type of preparation is: *Cavalletti* by Reiner Klimke)

"Throw your heart over the wall, your horse will jump after it"

Russian proverb from *Cavalletti* by Reiner Klimke

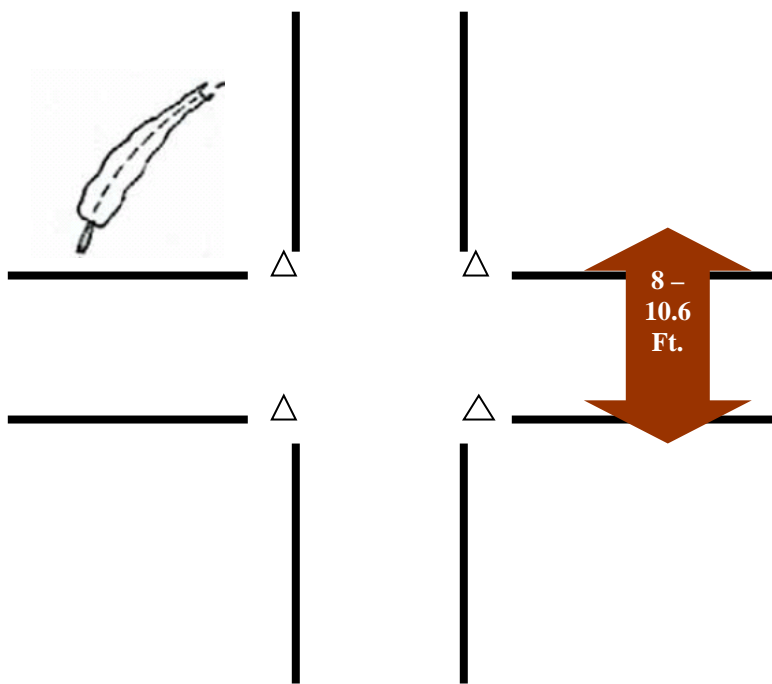
Here is one of my favorite cavalletti exercises, shared with me by Bettina Drummond, to help my Appendix Quarterhorse to begin to engage her hind quarters, while focusing ahead and picking up her feet. It also helped me to better develop my balance, focus, and use of aids without pulling on the inside rein. We have a long ways to go, but this exercise certainly helped us to develop a canter that allowed for practice with the garrocha.

Cantering the 'Plus Sign' Cavalletti Work

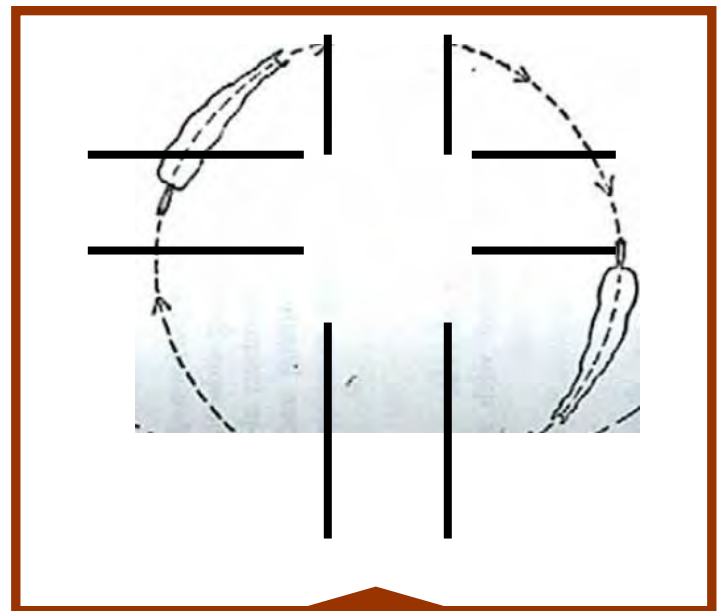
Materials/Equipment: Eight (8) ground rails, approximately 3 inches around and 12 feet long; Well-fitting saddle, snaffle bit or bosal – preferably set up with mecate or loop reins; Good footing; Positive attitude, posture, focus and breathing!

Prerequisite: Walk, trot, canter with an independent seat on both a casual rein and collected with contact. Physically fit horse and rider team.

Description & Progression of Maneuver: Set your 'Plus Sign' pattern up in the approximate dimension described below. After an appropriate gymnastic warm-up, begin the exercise at the trot first, then moving on to the canter. First, as you track right, ride three-quarters of the school or a large square, then focus your eyes, torso, shoulders, and hips in the center of the first set of poles, cross them, and return to the track. Next time around the school, focus on crossing the first two sets of poles, and return to the track. Keep adding pole sets until you are traveling on a circle around the entire 'Plus Sign'. You are looking for rhythm, balance, flow, and the horse picking his feet up over every pole, while cluing off your body position and focus. Try to use very little inside rein to guide the horse, but rather focus, keeping your inside leg on at the girth, and your outside leg slightly back to ask for 'forward' and to keep the hips from swinging-out. Shoulders should remain up, balanced and hips should be driving under and forward. Next, start the entire exercise over at the canter!



Begin by crossing just one set of poles, and then return to the track.



Proceed adding another set of poles each time, until you are making a complete circle. Aim your torso for the middle of each pole.

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIXX5lMhEw4
- www.andalusiandressagehorse.com/andalusian_horse_traditions_garrocha.htm
- www.vaquerogold.com/dvlist.html
- www.johnsaintryan.com

Cantering with the Garrocha



When cantering with the garrocha on a circle, around-under-away from the pole, you should have prepared your horse for these movements at the WALK! When cantering with the garrocha on your shoulder or under your arm, be very conscientious of your surroundings. Posts, lights, trees, branches, and other horses and humans can all add up to quite a wreck if hit by the pole. As a reminder, in true Doma Vaquera performance with the garrocha, only the walk, canter, back-up, halt, and sometimes a flat-out attack run, are gaits used. When you practice, try to not allow your horse to trot.

From a forward walk on a circle around the garrocha, pick up a right-lead canter. Try just a few strides and reward by coming back down to the walk, trying to maintain a circle by leaving the tip of the garrocha in the same basic spot on the ground.




After several successful attempts with this lead, change directions at the walk, and immediately pick up the left-lead. Conduct the same canter to walk exercise. Next, try changing direction at the walk in several different maneuvers. (i.e. Under the pole, away from the pole, half-pass while dragging slightly away from the pole to a turn-on-center under the pole.) The half-pass postures are great preparation for getting the haunches in, under the horse, to accomplish the canter pirouette. You may continue with this sequence of cantering exercises for quite some time before you feel ready to start the very small canter circle to the canter pirouette.

The second cantering exercise finds the garrocha either on your shoulder or under your arm pit. It is important that you practice picking up the canter from a halt, back-up, or walk...not a trot. These methods require the balance for the canter depart

to be over the hindquarters, and will serve you well when riding to a smaller and smaller circle. It may take a little time to find the place of balance for resting the garrocha. A nice sequence begins with the pole resting on your shoulder and your horse parallel with his nose facing the point of the garrocha as it sits on the ground. As you ride at the walk towards the point, allow the pole to slide up your shoulder until the balance allows the entire pole to rest on your shoulder...then canter! Again, be very cautious of your surroundings. The best place to practice might be in a big, open field!



 John Saint Ryan



The Spanish tradition of Doma Vaquera and the art form of using the garrocha is truly beautiful. As an aspiring horseman, I believe we have a responsibility to educate ourselves, read what the masters have suggested, observe, and then apply with patience, grace, and forgiveness. Give this instrument, the garrocha, a try to improve the symphony it takes to become a true horseman!

“Ask for much, be content with little, and reward often” Captain Beudant

“A horse will never tire of a rider who possesses both tact and sensitivity because he will never be pushed beyond his possibilities.” “In order to reduce to a minimum the problems and resistances which arise in the course of training the horse, it is necessary to have patience, gentleness, and some intelligence. Nuno Oliveira

Ray Hunt said of his Father, as he handled his draft horses...His horses always did everything he asked of them, because he never asked them to do or pull something they could not accomplish (paraphrased).

