

## *April 2007 Beyond the Basics*

### *Lesson Plans to Accomplishing Together- Part I*

Have you ever noticed that riding with a purpose is not only more enjoyable for you, but your horse seems to react and respond with more enthusiasm? If I have some cows to gather or a new trail to explore, I see the ears on my horse coming alert, her walk picks up, she is in perfect balance, and together we work as a team to accomplish this new job or adventure. My very favorite spring time activity is riding out into the pasture to separate the cows and their new baby calves from those mothers that have yet to calve. My horses truly enjoy the work too, with their mothering instincts rising up as we shepherd the newborns along one step at a time until their baby tails go straight in the air and they burst off in what looks like sheer joy! What fun to have a purpose...a job...a lesson plan for me and for my horse!

In the next series of articles we are going to discuss a set of lessons plans that you can accomplish to keep that type of enthusiasm in both horse and rider, while building on the basics of rhythm, timing, balance, focus, collection, engagement and ultimately feel. We will give you a collection of specific exercises, through which you can pick and choose, in an effort to keep your lesson plans fresh, without drilling, and keep both you and your horse looking forward to the job of training with joy!

***Here's the overarching game plan:*** Develop a set of exercises that build on the basics, to ultimately help horse and rider have effortless communication to accomplish many possible jobs and further the process of training.

You have heard me comment many times in the past: The better your horse goes forward, backwards, cross their hind quarters, and go sideways...The **BETTER** they will accomplish whatever you are asking of them! So the question is...How do I get my horse to become **better** at these basic movements, without drilling on the same set of exercises and patterns? How do I create fun jobs for my horse, when I don't have cows to gather, a trail to ride, or baby calves to nuzzle along? The answer is to first be creative, second to use the age-old, classical dressage training triangle to further develop your basic movements into a brilliant dance, and finally **develop a clear lesson plan.**

### **Classical Dressage**

#### **Training Triangle**

*Lightness & Brilliance!*  
*Collection & Engagement*  
*Swung & Impulsion*  
*Contact or Connection*  
*Balance & Suppleness*  
*Rhythm & Timing*  
*Focus with Purpose*



## The Three to Five Day Lesson Plan

Day One: Exercises that are accomplished on straight lines

Day Two: Exercises that are accomplished with lateral movements

Three-Five: Exercises that are used to combine the basics to accomplish Cowboy or Doma Vaquera or Classical Dressage moves & patterns



### **Executing the Three – Five Day Lesson Plan**

In developing a training regime that builds on the elements of the “Classical Dressage Training Triangle”- I look at varying my specific exercises into three basic categories or **DAILY FOCUS AREAS:**

#### **Day 1 - Straight Lines**

Here are the specific goals I aim to achieve within the training scheme, as I execute the “Straight Line” Day:

**Focus** – Always important for each training day! Included in this huge word is my Horseman’s Protocol (Become present; Think & picture; Allow; Reward), plus watching the eyes and ears of my horse to see that he is focused and ready to work

**Rhythm** – Exercises will include movements that work on: Rating, speed changes within the gait, and changes of gait

**Balance** - Exercises will include: Riding “perfect” circles or a Straight Line on a circle with the inside feet tracking up on the inside of the railroad track, and the outside pair of feet tracking up on the outside of the track. This simple exercise is VERY difficult! In order for this to happen correctly the body of both horse and rider needs to be in balance, with rhythm and focus.

**Collection & Engagement** –Exercises to be employed will build towards our horse developing first self-carriage, then freedom in their back muscles called *Swung*, and finally implementing a light collection with the hindquarters engaging from behind.

#### **Day 2 –Lateral Movements**

Goals we will accomplish through Lateral Maneuvers:

**Focus** – Again, focus is a critical component in everyday of training, but on the Lateral Day we will learn to become more geometrical in diagramming in our mind’s eye, the pattern we are asking the horse to accomplish, and the necessity of preparing our body to focus on that pattern ahead of time.

**Rhythm and Timing** – Lateral movements will greatly improve our ability to know “where” the feet are in all gaits, but also to develop the knowledge to understand “when” to influence where the feet and body goes.

An equally important aspect of training *the horse* to develop rhythm and timing, is the component that develops the same qualities in *the human*! A good horseman is a great dancer!

**Balance** – Of the three training days, the Lateral Movement Day is by far the one that works on balance and straightness the most. For leg yield and half pass postures to work in concert with rhythm, timing, and focus, both horse and rider must be in balance flowing with the movement.

#### **Day 3 – 4 and 5 – Cowboy, Doma Vaquera, and Classical Dressage**

These are the fun days where you combine the skills you have been honing in the Straight Day and the Lateral Day, to actually do a job. (Or at least accomplish an imaginary one!)

**Cowboy Day** – On this day you will play with combined maneuvers you would need on the ranch, such as roll backs, ¼ and ½ turn on the haunches, canter departures, flying lead changes, herd work, and mirror image games.

**Doma Vaquera** – Similar to the Cowboy Day, today you work the bulls from horse-back! Our lateral work becomes essential to save the life of ourselves and our horse. We develop a quick stop to a quick backup, and then the ability to ride off on a loose rein with the horse and rider in complete relaxation.

**Classical Dressage Day** – We will ride the patterns developed by centuries of training, to further develop our horse, ourselves, and our partnership, by selecting dressage tests to execute.



Here's how it will work...

For the next three months I will give you specific exercises to practice within the three to five day training schedule. It is a series of lesson plans for you and your horse. You may not have the luxury of riding five-days per week, but it will still give you some specific goals to accomplish every ride opportunity. You will have a clear purpose, and your horse will appreciate the clarity, consistency, and ultimately look forward to the work! Here are your lesson plans for the next month:

**Day One - Straight**  
Ground School:  
 Forward & backing on a circle  
Riding:  
 Ride actual straight lines & circles with changes of pace/speed within each gait (i.e. fast walk, medium walk, slow walk; Fast trot, medium trot, slow trot; Fast canter, medium canter, slow canter)

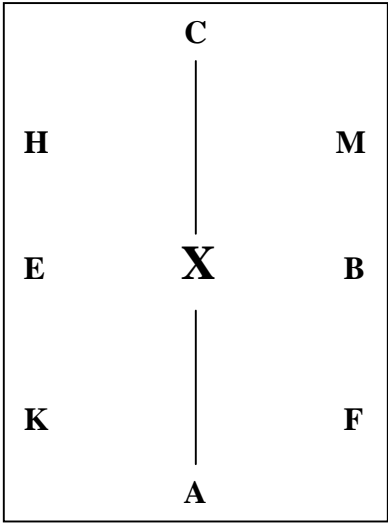
**Day Two - Lateral**  
Ground School:  
 Sideways or shoulder-in on a circle;  
 Counter-bend on large circle (shoulders move faster than hips)  
Riding:  
 Counter or reverse bends in each corner;  
 Leg yield on diagonal from quarter-line to track

**Day Three**  
**Cowboy**  
Ground School:  
 Western Swing and backing on a circle  
Riding:  
 Leg yield away from the wall to a roll back (1/2 turn towards the wall);  
 Circle to a smaller circle to a forward turn on the haunches

**Day Four**  
**Doma Vaquera**  
Ground School: In "ground riding" position, work on halt to backup  
Riding: After warm-up of both straight and lateral movements...halt to backup to trot and then to canter departures

**Day Five – Dressage Test**

1	A X	Enter working trot Halt at X, Salute Proceed working trot
2	C E	Track left Circle left 20m
3	Between K & A	Working canter left lead
4	B	Circle left 20m
5	Between centerline & B	Working trot
6	C C-H	Medium walk Medium walk
7	HXF F-A	Free walk Medium walk
8	A	Working trot
9	E	Circle right 20m
10	Between H&C	Working canter right lead
11	B	Circle right 20m
12	Between centerline & B	Working trot
13	A X	Down centerline Halt at X, Salute



A to X to C is the "Centerline"

