

## *May 2007 Beyond the Basics*

### ***Lesson Plans to Accomplish Together- Part II***

Several years ago at a clinic in Washington State, I had the opportunity to learn a valuable lesson about human nature, and horse-human relationships. It was the final day of a five day clinic and I thought I had been communicating a consistent set of over-arching goals and presenting a clear set of exercises to accomplish them. This particular morning we were working on a balanced turn on center in our ground work and then transferring that feeling, flow, and balance up into the saddle. I needed to leave the arena for a short time, and turned to one of the participants to ask them to take over for a period. The young lady I queried, who had been accomplishing the exercises effortlessly, said to me with all sincerity, "What are we working on?" At first I was a little angry and upset to think we had been working on a set of principles for five days, had been applying very specific exercises to practice these goals, and yet she had no verbal or pictorial idea of what we were working on, nor perhaps *why* we were accomplishing them! Once I settled down, I realized some valuable lessons that have since served me very well in my personal life and in helping others to develop a willing partnership with their horses.

1) **In life, and with horses, don't be afraid to ask...WHY?** In the scenario above, if the young lady had simply been more persistent in asking for clarification on why we were accomplishing certain exercises, and how it all related to our goals, then perhaps she would have been more clear and consistent in requesting those maneuvers from her horse, plus being confident in taking over the class instruction.

2) **Become your own best teacher!** As we have discussed many times, your horse is looking for your good leadership. Your ability to develop feel, timing, balance, and lightness is directly related to your understanding and practice of preparation, thought, focus, self-carriage, and posture. Developing a "Horseman's Protocol" is critical to your success in communicating to the horse. He is looking to you for clarity, consistency, compassion, understanding, patience, and forgiveness. All qualities of a good leader and a good teacher!

3) **Give yourself and your horse the gift of TIME!** Unfortunately in our current human world, time seems to be something in very short supply. Ask anyone "How are you doing?" and the answer will be, "I am so busy, and I just don't seem to have enough time." With this as the backdrop, it is very difficult to have a relationship with horses when their instincts relate to 'time' through their herd senses. They know when it is time to eat, play, sleep, and flight for their safety. In all of these essentials for their daily life, 'horse time' is still greatly dictated by the leader of the herd. Give yourself the time it takes to become present, think about what you are asking of your horse, visualize the perfect outcome, and allow the time for both you and the horse to accomplish the picture. In this process – the process of developing a 'Horseman's Protocol' - you will give the horse the time to recognize your leadership qualities.

4) **Plan your work...Work your plan!** Good teachers utilize well-constructed lesson plans.

They have seen the end result at the beginning, and they work backwards from that perfect picture to give the student the tools that constantly reinforce their vision. They are willing to set it up, and wait for the slightest try in the right direction, and then to reward that progress. A set of lesson plans have at their foundation, principles or goals that ultimately combine to create a wonderful knowledge base for both student and teacher. With horses, and perhaps people, when we join together to share this wisdom, it creates a beautiful dance that is truly brilliant.

As you move forward with accomplishing the lesson plans I am suggesting in this series of articles, keep the principles listed above in mind. It's really pretty simple...but not easy! Try to ***not*** find your horse asking you what my young client did years ago, "What are we working on?"!



**Quick Review** We are looking to develop a Three to Five Day Lesson Plan with specific focus areas each day to ultimately accomplish specific training goals.

| Training Goals          | Straight Day | Lateral Day | Cowboy Day | Doma Vaquera | Dressage |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------|----------|
| Focus & Purpose         | ✓            | ✓           | ✓          | ✓            | ✓        |
| Rhythm & Timing         | ✓            | ✓           |            |              | ✓        |
| Balance & Suppleness    | ✓            | ✓           | ✓          | ✓            | ✓        |
| Contact or Connection   | ✓            | ✓           |            | ✓            | ✓        |
| Swung & Impulsion       | ✓            | ✓           | ✓          | ✓            | ✓        |
| Collection & Engagement | ✓            | ✓           |            | ✓            | ✓        |
| Lightness & Brilliance  | ✓            | ✓           | ✓          | ✓            | ✓        |

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

### Day One - Straight

#### Ground School:

Square penning – Both at liberty & on the long line (Note: Shoulders stay balanced, corners are square)

#### Riding:

After your ground school and supple exercises on board:

Long-side / Short-side

Rating Exercises:

\*Rising trot medium on long-side to sitting trot slow on short-side;

\*Extended trot on diagonal, to sitting trot medium on short-side, to rising trot medium on long-side

\*Serpentine (Picture subway sandwich on top of subway sandwich!) Ride in consistent gate or ask for slowing through the middle of the school or increase rate through the middle & slow on the corners  
\*Figure 8's (Picture donut on top of donut) Alternate gate, alternate rate within the gate from circle to new circle, perfectly

### Day Two - Lateral

#### Ground School:

Work-in-Hand positioning (Note: With the Work-in-Hand you now have the advantage of the outside – support rein)

\*Shoulder-in on a circle to a leg yield to the wall to a back up  
\*Shoulder-in on a square

\*Shoulder-in to counter or reverse bend on a large circle  
\*At the wall, ask for a haunches-in

#### Riding:

After supple exercises while riding, and the counter bends from last month's drills –

\*Bow tie = Tracking left, pick up a right bend at the end of the long-side; Ride a ½ circle counter bend; Ride straight several strides, then leg-yield to the wall; Ride forward now tracking right; In the corner pick up a left bend; Ride a ½ circle counter bend; Straight for several strides, then leg yield

### Day Three

#### **Cowboy**

#### Ground School:

Ground riding to ½ Swing - Ground ride with your horse tracking left (your horse will be on your right); Direct your horse with your left hand on the lead around to his left & in front of you; Reach in with your right hand on the lead to cross his hindquarters, then move his forequarters to your right; Progress on in ground riding position, but now the horse in on your left; Repeat the opposite direction

#### 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 (Forward, small ½ circle, cross hindquarter, bring front end across for ¼ turn on the haunches)

### Day Four

#### **Doma Vaquera**

#### Ground School:

In "ground riding" position, work on halt to backup; Add variety: Backup fast, then depart at a trot; Backup slow, then rock forward, then rock back – Can you get the horse to mirror your every move?

Riding: After warm-up of utilizing previous straight and lateral day movements, and of course suppleness...  
\*Ride the 'Bow Tie' pattern, but carry the reverse or counter bend a little further on the circle (just shy of ¾'s); Change your aids to ask for the canter (Outside leg goes from relaxed to slightly back; Inside leg, hip, and hand comes slightly forward – No casting of the shoulders and think about cantering off on a straight line)

**Day Five – Dressage Test  
Training Level 4**

|    |               |                                                                                                          |
|----|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | A<br>X        | Enter working trot<br>Halt at X, Salute<br>Proceed working trot                                          |
| 2  | C<br>MXF      | Track right<br>One loop                                                                                  |
| 3  | Between A & K | Working canter right lead                                                                                |
| 4  | E             | Circle right 20m                                                                                         |
| 5  | E-H           | Working canter                                                                                           |
| 6  | H             | Working trot                                                                                             |
| 7  | C<br>C-M      | Medium walk<br>Medium walk                                                                               |
| 8  | MXK<br>K-A    | Free Walk<br>Medium Walk                                                                                 |
| 9  | A<br>FXM      | Working trot<br>One loop                                                                                 |
| 10 | Between C & H | Working canter left lead                                                                                 |
| 11 | E             | Circle left 20m                                                                                          |
| 12 | E-K           | Working Canter                                                                                           |
| 13 | K             | Working trot                                                                                             |
| 14 | B             | Circle left 20m rising trot,<br>allowing the horse to stretch<br>forward & downward<br>Shorten the reins |
|    | Before B      |                                                                                                          |
| 15 | B             | Working trot                                                                                             |
| 16 | E<br>X<br>G   | Turn left<br>Turn left<br>Halt, Salute                                                                   |

**A to X to C is the “Centerline”**

