

*Q: I have a husband and three kids at home and a hot schoolmaster in the barn. Will judges discriminate against me and my horse if I wear a safety helmet with my tailcoat instead of a top hat?*

*What about riding PSG in a snaffle?*

**BILL:** The judges will absolutely not discriminate against you for exercising caution and common sense. Aside from the rulebook making it completely legal, some will secretly admire you for eschewing the glamour road for the sake of yours and your family's wellbeing. You are more apt to have tales told about you for the reverse – the top hat worn in Intro, for example, which while legal, is pretty pretentious!

As for the snaffle bit in the St. George, most of the judges who'd have thought it inappropriate are dead and gone. I was once *praised* by a judge for doing even 4<sup>th</sup> level in a snaffle. While it won't affect your score one way or the other, if you can pull it off successfully, you'll get more admiring glances for braving the snaffle in FEI.

Weird rumors get started from time to time that have no basis in reality. I remember one circulating that you should never ride a test in a figure 8 noseband because the judge will assume that your horse is a "puller." Like good judges aren't smart enough to tell whether your horse is being carried around or holding himself in a correct carriage! Honest, judges generally have better things to worry about than the shade of your breeches, whether the buckles on your bridle match the ones on your spurs, or whether your mane is braided on the left or the right. If what you are doing is within the rules and your horse looks comfortable and happy, no one has a reason to complain about anything.