

## *An Interlude replaces The Current Question*

**BILL:** This month I do, indeed, have a few things to rant on.

Item Number 1: Some months ago I explained in this space why when I judge schooling shows, I try to apply the same standards that I do at recognized shows. Here's another reason, this time from the trainer's viewpoint. Recently several students of mine were treated very generously by an L judge at a schooling show, e.g.: for a line of tempi changes "*two mistakes -- 5.*" Or after some inadvertent tempis on the centerline on the way to the initial halt, again a 5. I was not present at the show. So when I taught these people the following week and they showed me their test sheets, the scores and remarks left no realistic picture of what their horses had looked like or how they'd performed. If the above scores were so off base, how could anyone assume that impulsion or submission scores were accurate either? Aside from the information doing me no good, both students are now hot to take their skills to a recognized show next. When they run into the buzz saw of a less tolerant S or I judge, they're going to be in for a shock as well as a big disappointment. So, please, for everybody's sake, if you're judging a schooling show, make lots of constructive comments, but don't do your riders any "favors" by skewing the scores up in an effort to make them happy.

Item Number 2: I'm about to judge the new 2010 eventing tests this weekend for the first time. Looking them over, I found a movement in a Prelim test which hasn't been included before. In the 20x40 arena, it reads:

*KXM Change rein, giving and taking the reins forward over X for 5 meters*

The accompanying Directives read: *Straightness on diagonal, the reach forward of the neck while maintaining the balance, smoothness of the giving and retaking.*

My problem is the lack of clarity of exactly what's expected. Does the "reach forward of the neck" imply that the horse should stretch down? If not, surely it isn't meant to encourage simply poking the nose forward! Is the horse supposed to stay "up" in a First Level-ish version of self carriage like the *uberstreichen* we see in Third Level? If I have these questions, certainly a lot of riders must have them too. Why can't the Directives be more helpfully explicit? Why in these technologically-sophisticated times couldn't the USEA test writers put a three minute video up on YouTube demonstrating what they want to see?

And Item Number 3: Again in the new Eventing tests, Beginner Novice A starts out:

*AXMC Enter working trot*

When I first saw this, I thought it must be a misprint! The rationale for this strange figure undoubtedly is to avoid having the green horse in his first test approach the scary judge's booth head on. This way, he gets to pass it side-on, presumably an easier task. One shortcoming with this reasoning: lots of Beginner Novices are the riders, not the horses. In this division we see lots of old packers that have been around the block (and up the centerline) many, many times without a problem. It brings up a larger question,

however. Yes, the tests are supposed to help bring the horses along confident in their training, but some things are supposed to be accomplished in their training before the horse ever comes to his first competition. Like going up the centerline. Or for that matter, being able to enter, halt, and move on. To those who think it's too much to ask a young horse to interrupt his forward flow with a halt right at the beginning, I wonder what that says about how on the aids (or not) they expect their horses to be when they take them out in public to compete. Since they also plan to gallop them cross country and ride a stadium round in the same competition, I'd think a simple display of having them in front of the leg wouldn't be an unreasonable demand!

OK, I feel better. Back to your questions next month.