

## THE TRAINING SCALE

This month let's talk about the basic framework that all dressage training is founded on, the Training Scale. It originated in Germany and has been taken on with much success globally. These concepts, which have been well tested over the years, of the way the horse travels are the building blocks to develop the ideal horse and rider team and is considered the clearest and most comprehensive way of expressing the basics of dressage.

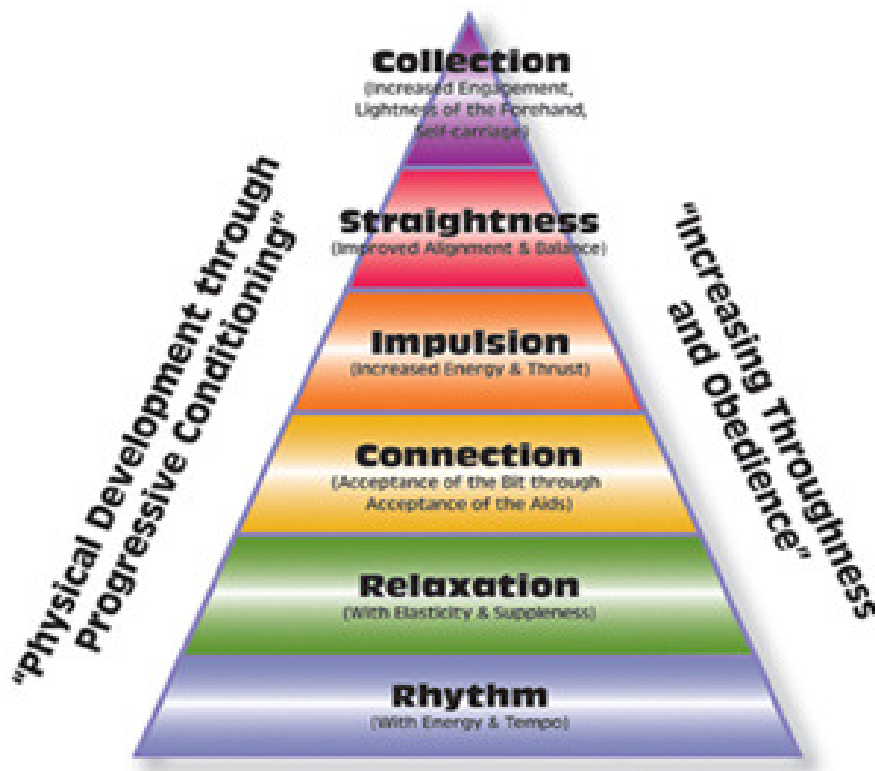
The Training Scale is a gymnastic plan to guide riders to develop the horse's natural, physical and mental capacities in a systematic way. The goal is to obtain a trusting partnership between the horse and rider, with the rider communicating in a respectful manner on an obedient, supple and comfortable horse that will stay sound longer. Unfortunately as this method does depend on patience from the trainer/rider, some try using quick fix fads, to skip over the basics in order to get on with the movements. These may provide a sense of victory in the short term but it is usually not sustainable and progress cannot be made as vital components of horse (and often the rider's) education are missing. In the words of Franz Mairinger from the Spanish Riding School who trained Australia's first Gold Medal winning eventing team "when we train horses we must make haste ...slowly".

Below is the official version of the training scale that shows these phases from the start point of Rhythm to the Nirvana of collection and throughness. Throughness is where the horse is relaxed and happy to allow the rider's aids through it's whole body without tightening of it's muscles or resistance with complete understanding to produce an active, athletic, beautiful way of going that is a pleasure to watch and bliss to be sitting on.



Some people can at times find the above chart a little complex and so I offer you an accepted alternative image of it. I personally like the idea of building blocks in the shape of a pyramid because you have a visual image of how important the base is in order to achieve the top of the pyramid of collection and throughness. Visually it is easy to see that the first step towards your goal- on which the whole pyramid is built on, and will topple and fall without it ..... is Rhythm. Until the horse works with Rhythm, it will be difficult to make him Supple, and until Supple, the Contact will be spasmodic and until the Contact is true, soft and still, Impulsion will be elusive. Then straightness cannot be maintained to allow the aids to flow through the horse to develop collection.

## Pyramid of Training



The levels are, from the base up are: (the English word is the closest interpretation to the German word)

1. Rhythm (TAKT)
2. Suppleness/relaxation (LOSSELASSENHEIT)
3. Contact (ANLEHNUNG)
4. Impulsion (SCHWUNG)
5. Straightness (GERADERICHTEN)
6. Collection (VERSAMMLUNG)

As I said earlier they are all interlinked and cannot be used in isolation from one another. You cannot think as a rider "well today I am going to work on the impulsion" and forget that what is vital to support the horse so he can show impulsion is to have him working rhythmically, with his back relaxed and a soft contact. Next month we talk about the different levels and what each means