

SPRING 2010

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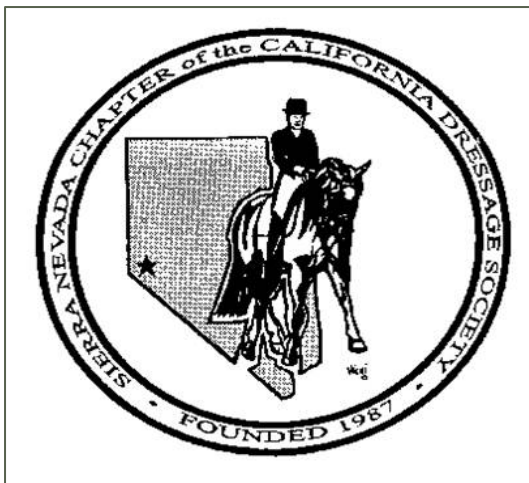
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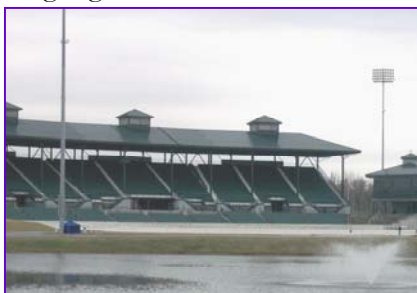
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Newsletter of
the Sierra Nevada Chapter
of the California
Dressage Society

Welcome to the Spring 2010 newsletter of the Sierra Nevada Chapter of the California Dressage Society. We are a chapter of 100 plus members from Northern Nevada and the outlying areas sharing the same passion, dressage. Please feel free to email us at snc-cds@charter.net with any questions or suggestions you may have.



New Stadium for *FEI World Equestrian Games 2010*

OPPORTUNITY CLASSES by Connie Davenport

Many dressage shows are now offering Opportunity Classes. Shows have several options, but these tests are generally Training Level 1 and 2, and First Level 1 and 2. The advantage of these classes is that you can participate without being a member of any of the organizations and no non-member fees will have to be paid. Horse Identification numbers are not required. Horses are exempt from the USEF Drug/Administration fee (\$15) but must pay the California Drug Fee (CDFA - \$5) This fee is exempt if competing in Nevada however.

If you participate in these classes, you must observe all show rules, including the Drug and Medication rule. If you do have any horse recording numbers, you are to submit those numbers with the entry and if you are a current member of any of the organizations that recognize the show, you must list those numbers on the entry. Some shows will allow you to cross enter into classes in the regular part of the show, but if you do so, all membership and horse recording requirements will apply.

This is a wonderful way to begin your dressage show career!



CONNIE DAVENPORT

PHOTO COURTESY of Sherri Scott Photography

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DRESSAGE RIDERS WAKE UP by **HILARI L. FLEMING, M.D., Ph.D.**

Because, at the time that I am writing this, Courtney King-Dye cannot. I believe by the time you read this, she will be well on her way to full recovery. As almost all of the Dressage world knows, Courtney King-Dye, an Olympic rider for the United States, suffered a severe head injury in a fall. It was apparently a fairly freak accident by the descriptions available. Unfortunately Courtney did not have a helmet on at that time.

We participate in a dangerous sport. Although most of us feel that since we do not jump and we do not ride at high speed, our risk of injury is small. Unfortunately that is not really true.

Statistics on the incidence of brain injury are not well documented. One 10 state study reported 217 deaths per year from riding incidents.¹ In the United States, the national electronic injury surveillance system documents approximately 70,000 people per year are treated or seen in an emergency room with horse related injuries. For the year 2008, horseback riding accounted for nearly 12,000 head injuries requiring emergency room treatment.

Riding ranked ninth among all sports in terms of number of head injuries treated in the year. Head injuries comprise of about 18% of all horseback riding injuries, but they are the #1 reason for hospital admissions and the leading cause of death. However, more telling is the fact that horseback riding is believed to carry a higher injury rate per hour of participation than football, hang gliding, and motorcycle racing. A motorcyclist can expect a serious incident at a rate of 1 per 7,000 hours. The horseback rider can expect a serious injury once every 350 hours. Due to riding associated head injuries, there are countless more people who end up with severe, often permanent disability.

Head injury or traumatic brain injury results from a blow to the head, a penetrating injury to the head or can even result from violent shaking of the head. Concussion is its mildest form. More severe forms can lead to prolonged coma and even death. As neurosurgeons, we cannot repair damage that has occurred to neurons or their processes that communicate between cells. Our major role is to try and prevent secondary injury. By that we mean injury to portions of the brain that have suffered reversible insults or were not injured in the initial trauma. We do this by attempting to maintain adequate blood flow and adequate oxygenation to the brain. We accomplish this medically by using drugs that can improve circulation and decrease brain swelling; sometimes surgically by removing blood clots, placing drains that can be used to decrease pressure within the skull and sometimes by even removing portions of the skull to prevent swelling from damaging the brain further. Because we cannot "fix the brain," our best approach to deal with this devastating problem is prevention. I have taken care of several friends with brain injuries due to riding over my career, and I would like nothing better than to eliminate the need for this portion of my work.

Many people would also argue that because they do not jump, their risk is low, and many lifelong riders feel that their experience protects them. When top level professional and Olympic riders suffer head injury we should all realize that experience and expertise cannot prevent accidents. The question of whether a greater degree of skill gives rise to greater safety has been addressed. The data, however, is from three-day eventing and, therefore, not necessarily applicable to other areas of riding. However, studies have shown that the highest injury rates are among those riders competing at the highest levels. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

LOCAL RIDER POST RIDING ACCIDENT



Photo Courtesy of: Carien Schippers for Horse Sports Photography

A Pony Club report from 1999 shows that in children those with the greatest number of years of experience have the highest incidence of accidents. This may have several contributing factors including the fact that younger and less experienced riders may be more willing to use safety equipment and of course they are challenging themselves less than the more experienced riders. Now allowed to wear helmets competing at FEI levels. To our professional and international level riders, I would like you to think of the number of people particularly amateurs and young riders, to whom you are a role model and to suggest that wearing a helmet whenever you ride may influence many others to do likewise.

Our lives are all busy and we have probably all walked out to the arena and realized we left our helmet at the barn but for any of us it is much easier to find a couple of minutes to go back to the barn to get the helmet than it is to spend weeks to months in a hospital and rehabilitation. Finally, many people complain that helmets are just plain too hot. I certainly agree with this. I have suffered heat stroke while riding and I sincerely wish that shows would waive coat requirements sooner than they usually do, but I don't think taking off a helmet is a good solution.

There are helmets on the market now that have better ventilation. I do think we need to challenge helmet manufacturers to try and improve ventilation even more and perhaps to design some helmets with dressage riders in mind. Currently the GPA style helmet that is very popular in the hunter/jumper world has been copied by other manufacturers but perhaps we can get together and think of design features we would like for dressage helmets and entice a manufacturer to try and design one for us!

It is a joke among our local Sierra Nevada Chapter of the California Dressage Society that for years my excuse for never achieving FEI levels was that I couldn't wear a helmet, therefore, I could never ride above Fourth level. Fortunately, our national organizations have changed and we are now allowed to wear helmets competing at FEI levels. Because of international traditions, I think we are a long way from our national organizations mandating helmet use, but I hope that helmet use will become so common that we no longer notice it as "different." I, for one, will be out there proudly riding in my helmet and tails as soon as I can figure out how to count my changes!

HILARI L. FLEMING, M.D., Ph.D.

Book Review by Susan Ward

An Approach to a Lighter and Happier Dressage Horse by Ellen Eckstein and Betty Staley

I have known Ellen Eckstein for 13 years. While living in California, I was fortunate to be able to work with Ellen several times a month. After moving to Nevada ten years ago, I continued to use her techniques while riding, handling horses on the ground, and loading in the trailer. My recollection of the exact riding exercises discussed in this book faded over a period of time. I was thrilled to discover that she had compiled these foundational building blocks for increasing personal connection between horse and rider into a book, **BRINGING IT TOGETHER**.

Ellen has had a life long goal of combining techniques and thoughts that she learned from Tom Dorrance with those of classical dressage. Her approach transcends disciplines with a common goal of improving every horse by allowing the horse to find freedom within the aids, rather than feeling confined by the aids.

The book details three basic exercises (Reach Forward, Reach Rein-back, and Step by Step) which focus on allowing the horse to learn the concept of moving forward hind legs first. The book is very easy to read and understand. The accompanying video is a wonderful complement to the book and literally "brings the book to life". The video is brief enough to watch repeatedly before going out to ride. Through the book and DVD, Ellen explains how the rider's attention to footfalls, the rider's legs as an extension of the horse, as well as the timing of application of the aids and the horse's response result in an improvement in the horse's freedom of movement. The results of the practice of the techniques and the horse learning the concepts is evident in the happier horse and increased harmony between horse and rider.

Since reading the book, I decided to ride through it on my Grand Prix level dressage horse as a part of this book review. Although I have been using some exercises which were similar, I had lost the exactness of Ellen's exercises while riding on my own. I was not surprised to find that my horse's natural reluctance to come through on the right hind leg was again exposed in the Reach Forward exercise. His response improved quickly with repetition. Reschooling the Reach Rein-back as a training aid was very helpful to improve my horse's quality of movement. This is an exercise that I had used frequently when my horse was younger. I must admit that I was relieved to find that I was using the exact timing of the Step by Step exercise as a part of my half halt during passage, and since have made a concerted effort to utilize it throughout my ride. My horse has also responded well to a more distinct use of a combination of the exercises as rebalancing half halts in corners, short sides, and in preparation for more advanced movements.

I am hopeful that the success of **BRINGING IT TOGETHER** An Approach to a Lighter and Happier Dressage Horse will spawn the development of a series which will detail more of Ellen's techniques for riding and groundwork in the development of happy young and young at heart horses. www.bringingittogethersedressage.com



2010 CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

- **May 21st-23rd-Jeff Ashton-Moore Clinic/Equest Training Ctr-Victoria Cliff -775-849-0105**
- **June 12th & 13th ~ Franktown Meadows June Dressage Classic** Franktown Meadows Equestrian Center. Judge: Angela Littlefield 'S'. Contact www.franktownmeadows.com
- **June 18th-20th ~ Golden State Dressage Classic** Location: Rancho Murieta, CA www.goldenstatedressage.com
- **June 26th-27th ~ Dressage Derby.** Location Vacaville, CA www.christianoelting.com
- **June 26th-28th-Jeff Ashton-Moore Clinic/Equest Training Ctr-Victoria Cliff -775-849-0105**
- **July 17th & 18th ~ ***SNC-CDS Dressage in the Sierra** Location: Franktown Meadows Equestrian Center. Judge: Mary Grace Davidson 'S'.
- **July 30-Aug 1-North Regional Adult Amateur Championships**-Starr Vaughn, Elk Grove, CA
- **July 31st-August 1st ~ Golden State Dressage Warm Up/Cool Down** Location: Elk Grove, CA www.goldenstatedressage.com
- **August 5th-8th ~ CDS Junior Championships North** Location: Rancho Murieta, CA
- **August 21st & 22nd ***SNC-CDS Summer Dressage** Fuji Park Carson City Judge:Louise Koch
- **September 18-19-SNC Clinic with Rachel Saaverda** Sheridan Creek Equest Center Gardnerville, NV
- **October 7th-10th ~ 43rd CDS and USDF Region 7 Championships** and Breeders West Coast Finals Los Angeles Equestrian Center, Burbank, CA
- **October-Pumpkin Roll Show** hosted by Reno Chapter-Location & Date **TBD**
- **September 25th - October 10th, 2010 ~ [Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, Kentucky Horse Park](#)**

Helmet 101 by Beth Coffey-Curle

Selecting the best fitting helmet is the first step for a rider in making the ongoing commitment to wearing one every day. There are several different manufactures of helmets that produce a variety of shapes and sizes so finding a helmet that fits well is not as difficult as it was even 10 years ago.

Equestrian helmets have sport-specific differences from those used in other sports. For this reason, a helmet designed for another sport, such as bicycle helmet, is not deemed suitable for equestrian sports. The equestrian helmet covers more of a person's head than does a bicycle helmet, fitting lower on the head, particularly at the back of the skull, and has protection distributed evenly around the head rather than concentrated in the front and back.

How to Properly Fit a Helmet:

- ▶ Measure the circumference of your head, placing the measuring tape about one inch above your eyebrows. Round your measurement to the nearest half-inch.
- ▶ Consult a helmet sizing chart and match your measurement to the appropriate helmet size. The size range runs from size 6 for an 18-inch circumference to a size 7-3/4 for a 25-inch circumference.
- ▶ Make sure any helmet you try is ASTM/SEI certified. ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) determines helmet standards and SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) confirms that particular helmets comply with those regulations.
- ▶ Place the helmet on your head with the visor level. Fasten the chin strap so it's close against your chin. It should fit snugly all around your head. If there is room between your head and the helmet, you need a smaller size. If the helmet squeezes your head causing discomfort, you likely need a bigger size.
- ▶ The helmet should not press on your ears. If it does, adjust the suspension and padding inside the helmet so it rests above the ears.
- ▶ Check the helmet's brim. It should be one and a half inches above your eyebrows. If it is higher than that, it is not providing complete protection.
- ▶ Bend over and shake your head up and down and from side to side. The helmet should not slide during these motions.

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