

## **The kinds of riding and the different disciplines**

*Please note: the following is an euro-centric view of horse riding and does not take into account the relationship between horses and indigenous cultures throughout the world. Those relationships are varied and have resulted in many different sports and activities which are well-worth your attention and learning. We are researching indigenous riding and sports in order to add them to this document.*

### **Western Riding**

Though there are significant differences in equipment, there are fewer differences between English and Western riding than appear at first glance. Both styles require riders to have a solid seat, with the hips and shoulders balanced over the feet, with hands independent of the seat so as to avoid jerking the horse in the mouth and interfering with its performance.

Western riding in North America originated from the Spanish conquistadors in the 17th Century. As the conquistadors traveled to what is now Texas and California, this style of riding began to spread across the continent.

Both equipment and riding style evolved to meet the working needs of the cowboy in the American West. American cowboys needed to work long hours in the saddle over rough terrain, sometimes needing to rope cattle with a lariat (or lasso). Because of the necessity to control the horse with one hand and use a lariat with the other, western horses were trained to neck rein, that is, to change direction with light pressure of a rein against the horse's neck. Horses were also trained to exercise a certain degree of independence in using their natural instincts to follow the movements of a cow, thus a riding style developed that emphasized a deep, secure seat, and training methods encouraged a horse to be responsive on very light rein contact.

From these beginnings, the modern competitive Western events of cutting, reining, speed events, and general performance divisions have developed. The popularity of Western riding has grown tremendously during recent years and Western riding enthusiasts can now be found worldwide.

### **THE EXHILARATION OF BARREL RACING**

Barrel Racing tests the speed, accuracy, and control of the horse and rider. The horse and rider must complete a triangle of 3 barrels set at measured distances as quickly and as error-free as possible. The barrels are negotiated in a clover-leaf pattern. The tightest possible turns must be made around the barrels while maintaining and controlling the speed.

Penalties are assessed if a barrel is knocked over by adding a set amount of seconds to the pair's final time. Going off-course or off the pattern results in disqualification. The horse and rider pair with the fastest time wins.

### **THE INTUITIVENESS OF CUTTING**

Cutting tests the instinct, intelligence, and agility of the horse and the judgment and training provided by the rider. The pair must select a calf from a herd of cattle, isolate it, and prevent it from returning to the herd. A time is allotted; more than one calf can be cut in a contest, but only one calf at a time.

The cutting horse's "cow sense" is its instinct and ability to match the calf's movement. This is scored by a judge along with factors such as the challenge of the calf selected and any errors made by the horse/rider.

### **THE EXCITEMENT OF REINING**

A judged event designed to show the athletic ability of a Western type horse in a show arena. In Reining, competitors are required to run one of several approved patterns. Each pattern includes small slow circles, large fast circles, flying lead changes, roll backs, 360 degree spins done in place, backups and exciting sliding stops.

### **THE RELAXATION OF WESTERN PLEASURE**

A Western style of competition that evaluated horses on manners and the suitability of the horse for a relaxed but collected gait of cadence and relatively slow speed, along with calm and responsive disposition.

### **WESTERN DRESSAGE**

Western Dressage integrates the historically validated principles of Dressage with the best of Western Working Horse tradition. It is a systematic and progressive system of training for the Western horse and rider, in the traditional stock tack with the purpose of enjoying a safe, pleasurable, versatile and useful working horse.

## **English Riding**

English riding is a form of horse riding seen throughout the world. There are many variations, but all feature a flat English saddle without the deep seat, high back or saddle horn seen on a Western saddle nor the knee pads seen on an Australian Stock Saddle. Saddles within the various English disciplines are all designed to allow the horse the freedom to move in the optimal manner for a given task, ranging from classical dressage to horse racing. English bridles also vary in style based on discipline, but most feature some type of noseband as well as closed reins, buckled together at the ends, that prevents them from dropping on the ground if a rider becomes unseated. Clothing for riders in competition is usually based on traditional needs from which a specific style of riding developed, but most standards require, as a minimum, boots; breeches or jodhpurs; a shirt with some form of tie or stock; a hat, cap, or equestrian helmet; and a jacket.

English riding is an equestrian discipline with many different styles, however, at the most basic level, most versions require riders to use both hands on the reins, rather than just one hand, as is seen in western riding. Riders generally "post" or "rise" to the trot (rising and sitting in rhythm with each stride). The "posting trot" is used most often in a working or extended trot, although there are also times when English riders may sit the trot; the "sitting trot" is most often used to ride collected forms of the trot seen in dressage, show hack and hunt seat equitation competition.

Several disciplines originated from military training or foxhunting in England and Europe.

### **THE COLLABORATION OF COMPETITIVE TRAIL**

Competitive Trail Riding tests the stamina, manners, and conditioning of the horse and rider. It has some similarities, but is quite different from the discipline of Endurance (see below). Competitive Trail

rides can be up to 40 miles long and are to be finished within the time allotted, and not over or under the set time. Veterinarian checks must be completed.

Horse and rider pairs are scored on a demerit system, based on the conditioning and manners of the horse and rider. A scoring system penalizes horse and rider for aspects such as unsatisfactory pulse rate, lesions, lameness etc. The pair with the lowest score (lowest number of demerits) wins.

## **THE ART OF DRESSAGE**

“Dressage” is derived from the French verb “dresser”, meaning “to train”. Dressage is the systematic and sequential training of horse and rider, developing harmony between the two. The object is to produce a willing, obedient, balanced, and supple horse that appears to require minimal input from the rider.

A standard dressage test involves a series of movements the horse and rider must perform to demonstrate the correct progression of the pair’s training. Each movement is performed at a specified point. The difficulty of the tests increases gradually, with a horse at the highest level showcasing a very high degree of obedience, gymnastic ability, and wonderfully graceful, expressive and rhythmic movement.

Dressage can also be performed as a freestyle or as a pas-de deux. A freestyle is a dressage test set to music of the rider’s choice. A required set of movements must be demonstrated, and it is the choice of the rider as to where and in what order the movements are executed. A pas-de-deux involves two horse and rider pairs, who perform a series of movements together in a mirror image of the other.

In dressage, horse and rider combinations are scored in percentages; a score in the early 60’s and upwards is desirable. The pair with the highest score wins.

## **THE THRILL OF SHOW JUMPING**

Show jumping is a test of power, precision, agility, and speed. The horse and rider must navigate a course of brightly colored fences in an optimum time while incurring as little faults as possible. The courses are designed to challenge the horse and rider’s ability to make adjustments on course as required in order to leave all the obstacles intact.

Faults are assessed for a knockdown (4 faults), a refusal (4 faults), a run-out (4 faults), a fall (elimination), or for being over the time allowed (1 fault per 4 seconds over the time allowed). While there are several different formats used in show jumping, generally, a horse and rider pair that posts a clear (fault-free) round is eligible for a jump-off. A jump-off is a race against the clock over a shortened course. The horse and rider with the fewest faults and fastest time wins.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF HORSE TRIALS / EVENTING**

Eventing tests the courage, stamina, and versatility of the horse and rider. Advanced eventing is held over 3 days - called 3-day eventing - each day featuring a different phase of competition: dressage (see above) on day 1, cross-country - which can include 4 phases - on day 2, and show jumping (see below) on day 3. Cross-country consists of 2 roads and tracks phases, a steeplechase phase, and the exciting cross-country phase in which a jumping course made up of natural, solid obstacles is set over varied terrain that the pair must negotiate.

The competition encompasses 3 separate tests, each scored individually but added together for the final results. Penalties or faults will be totaled and the horse and rider pair with the fewest combined faults over the 3 days wins.

## **THE RESILIENCE OF ENDURANCE**

Endurance riding tests the stamina, speed, and conditioning of the horse and rider. Total distances per ride vary, with the longest and most difficult rides around 100 miles, to be completed in 24 hours. Different types of terrain and natural hazards must be negotiated, calling for an obedient horse and knowledgeable rider. Various veterinarian checks must be completed during the ride to monitor the horse's "soundness" or conditioning and deem the horse and rider pair fit to continue.

The object is to complete the ride in the fastest time possible, while passing the vet's inspections. The first horse and rider pair to finish the ride and also receive the vet's approval wins.

## **Other Disciplines**

### **THE DARING OF DRIVING**

Driving is an unmounted equestrian discipline in which one or more horses pull the driver(s) in a carriage. Like all equestrian disciplines, driving can be for recreation and pleasure, or for sport. Competitive driving competitions include four-in-hand, pairs, singles, and tandems. There are 3 types of driving competitions: presentation/dressage, marathon, and obstacle driving. A popular combination of these is called Combined Driving.

Combined Driving is the equivalent to ridden eventing (see English), testing the horse and driver's courage, stamina, and versatility. The three phases include: Dressage (see above) in which the horse, while pulling a carriage, must demonstrate a series of movements and demonstrate willingness, obedience, balance, and suppleness; Marathon in which there are several phases, including the navigation of obstacles over varied terrain where each obstacle has a start and finish and is timed separately; and Obstacles (cones) in which the carriage, within a time allowed, must be accurately pulled through obstacles (cones with balls on top) that are set barely wider than the carriage itself. Any cones that are touched or balls dislodged results in penalties assessed.

The horse(s)/driver pair with the fewest penalties assessed over all components wins.

### **THE EXCITEMENT OF VAULTING**

Vaulting is sometimes called gymnastics on horseback. Vaulting tests the control, obedience, and steadiness of the horse, while the vaulter, on top of the horse, demonstrates the gymnastic requirements of balance, flexibility, strength, and style. Vaulters compete both individually, men and women, and in teams.

A vaulting team is composed of several vaulters and one reserve vaulter, one "lunger" (controls the horse on a circle with the use of a long line attached to the horse's bridle, called "lunging"), and one horse. The horse is "lunged" at a canter, left-hand on a circle with a minimum diameter of 13 meters. Both the individual and team vaulting competition consist of two parts: the compulsory test and the freestyle test.