



CRC DRESSAGE – HOW IT WORKS



CRC TRAINING TESTS AND JUDGING SYSTEM

Many people ask what is so different about the judging methods we have introduced for the CRC Dressage Training Test Days. Firstly, CRC Judges have to ride, and preferably train, at least to the Elementary Level before they are considered for our recommended List. Secondly, our Tests are designed in such a way that although each movement must be performed and in the set order, the judge is not required to give a mark movement by movement. Instead, the judge assesses the **whole picture** in a way more similar to Freestyle Dressage to Music.

Each CRC score sheet comprises 3 sections: Gaits, General Aspects and Rider Marks. The General Aspects section gives marks for First Impression and Second Impression which are added together at the end to give an average; the Rider Marks have a coefficient of 1.5. Since the CRC system marks individual riding and training qualities, judges will find the marks speak for themselves so valuable time normally spent dictating will be gained and the judge can concentrate on the performance and flow of the test. If the mark for a particular Aspect does not suffice, further clarification is offered in the Judge's Comments at the end.

We hope that this way of marking will encourage riders who may have suffered indifferent judging in the past to have another go. The CRC method makes it easier for judges to mark courageously, using the whole range of marks to emphasis areas where something is well shown or lacking. Thus a horse which receives a high mark such as 8:9 on the 'Forwardness section may only achieve 3:4 on Suppleness and Bending. This shows riders what areas or General Aspects of their horse's way of going most need to be worked on. Too often, we see score sheets with 5s and 6s running all the way through; these results do not necessarily tell us exactly where horse and rider are improving or going wrong.

Finally, the concept of First and Second Impressions is important since many horses and riders start off rather tense, but generally improve as they relax. Therefore, riders may take comfort that after a poor start, they still have the chance dramatically to improve their overall score in the General Aspects by the end of the test.

A comprehensive guide to the CRC Dressage Training Test system of marking is fully outlined and explained in the CRC Judges' Guidelines booklet; *"Making a Difference, CRC Dressage - An Innovative Way of Test Riding"*. This booklet is available from the CRC Office at a purchase price of £3.50 (UK) or online from www.classicalriding.co.uk



CRC JUDGING – HOW IT WORKS

CRC RULES AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

CRC Rules are outlined in the published *CRC Judges' Guidelines Booklet* which we strongly recommend you purchase (see merchandise). Generally our rules are similar to the national BHS/FEI rules, except for the following:-

1. It is not recommended that a bit other than a snaffle is used up to Novice Level and two bonus marks will be given to horses working in a (BD) approved snaffle at whatever level. However, horses may be ridden in a bitless bridle, hackamore, kimblewick, pelham (without roundings) NB: NO gags or cherry rollers. Thus, ultimately riders have much greater freedom of choice with regard to biting.
2. Rising trot is required at Preliminary to Novice Level. From Novice/Elementary Level and above riders may sit or rise at their own discretion unless otherwise indicated. Competitors riding in Western or Portuguese saddles that do not rise in trot when required, will be considered to be riding the test Hors Concours.
3. The voice may be used, very quietly and under the breath, at discreet intervals throughout the Test, but should in no way be a disturbance to the Judge or onlookers. Any clicking of the tongue should be unobtrusive.
4. Riders may be eliminated for :-
 - over-use of spurs or dressage whip after one verbal warning
 - a continuous 20 second disobedience/resistance (See BD 84(b))
 - 3 errors of course
5. Bonus marks will be awarded as follows: snaffle bit - see above - (2 marks), no spurs (1 mark), cavesson noseband (2 marks).
6. Fly fringes, gauzes, nose and ear covers may be worn but should be unobtrusive. Sidesaddles, Portuguese, Spanish and Western saddles, and cruppers are permitted.

We recommend, where possible, soft background music be played throughout all Tests.

CRC Dressage Training Test Sheets & Mark Sheets can be downloaded from the library section of the Website. Club Rosettes (1st-6th place including CRC Special and Distinction Rosettes) are all available to purchase in the Merchandise Section.



CRC JUDGING PRINCIPLES

CRC Marksheets are completely different from those used by the FEI or BD. They are split into three sections as follows:-

GAITS

The judge must assess each gait for its overall quality remembering that freedom, elasticity, rhythm and regularity will all play a part. He/she should have one standard only for each gait and should not be influenced by the breed type or size of horse/pony. Gaits may account for less than a quarter of the total marks in the CRC tests, so the average horse/ pony can, and will, have a fair chance of success if well-trained and well-ridden.

RIDER MARKS

Correct Use of Hands: these should be used discreetly but effectively as a pair. They should appear to be steady, with no pulling or jerking backwards. They must apply a light but allowing contact with the horse's mouth via the reins which themselves should form an unbroken line extension of the forearm to the bit.

Correct Use of Legs and Seat: both should be adhesive, supple and supportive in the aiding of the horse, but at all times the use of these aids should be quiet and unobtrusive. The leg and seat aids will also be judged by their effect on the horse's way of going (ie: Gaits and General Aspects).

General Position and Balance: the rider should sit quietly and centrally. The torso should be vertical and the head looking forward between the horse's ears neither tilted down nor to one side. The shoulder, hip and heel should be in vertical alignment; the thigh and leg should be well stretched down, the foot facing forward and the heel slightly lowered. The rider's overall appearance should be such that if the horse were suddenly to disappear, the rider would remain balanced over his or her feet.

GENERAL ASPECTS

Responsiveness/Attentiveness: the horse must appear to be in a calm, confident and obedient frame of mind, responsive to the rider's aids.

Correct Contact: as a result of relaxation and flexion of the jaw, the horse's head should be slightly in front of the vertical, never behind, with the poll the highest point. The neck should be stretched forward and rounded not shortened and compressed. The head should be steady and the rein contact light, giving the picture of self-carriage in the more advanced horse.

Straightness and Correct Alignment on Curved Lines: the horse's topline, from tip of nose to base of tail, should seem to be superimposed over the line on which it is moving, whether straight or curved. The hind feet should step into or beyond the track of the front feet, and the head and neck should be correctly aligned.

Forwardness in Correct Rhythm: the horse must move forwards willingly from a light leg taking the correct length of stride, actively and in rhythm, without hurrying.

Balance/Engagement: At the lower levels, good signs are smooth, clear downward transitions and a steady rhythm and correct tempo to the trot and canter, especially through turns and circles. The judge must also look at the overall picture for signs of correct carriage. Later, as the horse engages behind, the hindlegs should step deeper under the body with a greater degree of bending in the hind limb joints. This in turn will lift the withers to give the appearance of lightness of the forehand. At higher levels the judge will look for more self-carriage without loss of activity or forwardness (collection/engagement) and without hurrying.

Overall Suppleness and Freedom Through the Back: the horse must be capable of bending evenly through his whole body on curved lines and in lateral work. Good signs are ample tracking in the trot, a certain looseness in the shoulders with the horse's head and neck correctly positioned (not pulled in). There should be no signs of hollowing or stiffening over the back. The rider is carried comfortably in riding or sitting trot with a rhythmic, softly swinging back.

Quality of Transitions: the changes of gait must be clearly discernible but smooth and not abrupt. The characteristics of the new gait must be immediately established but in a fluent, harmonious fashion without subsequent loss of rhythm or balance. The quality of transitions is often the hallmark of the training as a whole.

Movements: At Elementary and above level, these should be judged and marked for their quality, definition and ease of movement. Any loss of rhythm, engagement or balance should be marked down.

*The CRC Method of Judging and Marking is discussed further in the published
CRC Judges' Guidelines:-*

*"Making A Difference, CRC Dressage,
An Innovative Way of Test Riding"-*

Please see the Merchandise Section of the Website to Purchase