



Dynamic riding

If you separate each aid and fine tune them one by one, when you put them back together again riding becomes much more simple; American Classical trainer Craig Stevens explains

Crystal had become an expert at swinging her quarters in half-pass



The lesson

Since their last lesson with Craig, Mark explained that he and Crystal have been having trouble with half-pass. Mark said he finds it hard to soften the contact in the half-pass - he always wants to try and correct Crystal to keep her straight. Crystal is an expert 'wiggler' and this makes Mark's job all the more difficult. "Use the half-halt more often to keep the pace slow, so that she finds it easier to be straight. This permits her more time to find her balance," Craig suggested.

Craig took over control of the reins and placed Crystal in half-pass position



If Crystal wants to go round in circles, Craig suggested that Mark supported her desire



bit weak with your aids - make everything really clear to her," he said.

"If you need to surrender the bend of the half-pass a bit to keep correct crossing in the half-pass, then do.

"And if it all goes wrong, be quick to stop the movement and start it from scratch - don't battle on with Crystal wiggling all over the place and everything getting worse and worse."

Bingo! Dowed with going backwards and round in circles Crystal went into a lovely half-pass



Swinging in roundabouts

Mark started the half-pass and Crystal, although showing a few nice steps, had a tendency to swing her quarters to avoid stepping underneath her body. Craig stepped in to help.

"I'm going to hold her in the correct half-pass position," Craig explained. "She might try and do everything else except go sideways but that's fine, I can wait.

"You can be fairly sure Crystal will get fed up with trying to evade the issue at some point. Then, the best option she has is to go sideways - just what we want!"

After some swinging of the quarters, going backwards and dancing on the spot, Crystal finally made the decision that perhaps going sideways was the best option after all, and offered some good half-pass steps.

Rider control

Craig gave the reins back to Mark. "Now you do the same," he said. Crystal, now finding she could escape more easily, starting going backwards. "If Crystal wants to go backwards help her out," Craig said. "You're her friend, say to her: 'you want to go backwards no problem. Come on I'll help you, let's go backwards together'."

Crystal soon became fed up with this game and decided she would try and swing her head and neck one way and her quarters the other.

"Now she wants to go round in circles," said Craig. "Well that's fine, too. Help her do that instead. If Crystal wants to go round in circles let her know she has your full support."

Crystal soon got fed up with this game, too, and next time, when Mark asked her sideways, she obliged very nicely.

In the half-pass, Craig suggested Mark used light touches with the whip to ask Crystal sideways so she is clear exactly what is required. "Sometimes you are a

