

Coventry Equestrian Center



[www.CoventryEquestrianCenter.com](http://www.CoventryEquestrianCenter.com)



I prefer to call dressage “gymnastic training” which is what it is for the horse. By gymnastically riding our horse in both directions and keeping its shoulders straight (in line with the haunches)

**A Day In the Life of Coventry** - Horses stuck in Friday and Saturday night. heavy storms. Pastures were replenished with rain! Horses out Sunday evening. One nice thing about a horse show is it causes me to get the farm fixed up. Here is our center piece in the middle of driveway! In case you wonder why that is there, it is because a well is underneath! Why put a well in the middle of driveway, I have no idea the farm came that way. Do you guys know how long I have been at this farm since 1992. Sylvester likes the flowers.



This horse's outside shoulder is popped or bulging. Rider has no support with the outside rein...

we are training the horse to work evenly. The dressage judge will evaluate how well we are doing this, and those riders who do not show dressage will just use gymnastic dressage training to make the horse more pliable, responsive to the aids and balanced both longitudinally & laterally!\* As a result, by knowing why we want our horses straight and having the ability to control the shoulders the horse will perform better for all disciplines. Ultimately, our horses should be trained with “four way



Horse is bending left & rider has support of outside rein resulting in shoulder being up & not “popped.”

### The Horse's Shoulders

During our lessons we hear a lot about the horse's shoulders. Phrases such as -- the shoulders are falling out, falling in or collapsing, bulging, or he's popping his shoulder. Then a trainer may say did you feel those shoulders lifting, we need to get his shoulders up...!

Most riders just do what the trainer says but does anyone wonder why we obsess over the horses' shoulders?

The reason we talk about the shoulders is to get the horse straight and, as a result, balanced. But why do we care if the horse is straight or balanced? We want our horses straight and balanced so they will work evenly on both sides of their bodies. Why do we want our horses to work evenly on both sides of its body, to impress a judge for dressage shows or to develop our horse as an athlete? The answer is both. Dressage tests simply evaluate how well you are training your horse. Each movement is performed in both directions tracking right and left so the judge can score how well you train your horse in each direction.



Absolutely straight. This horse's shoulders are in alignment with the haunches. When the horse is straight it tracks evenly with both hind legs.

stretch,” meaning on all sides of their body with the rider always being able to control the shoulders with the outside rein.

\*Longitudinal means training the horse back to front such as stretching or transitions with in the gait. Laterally means training the horse from side to side as in lateral work such as leg yielding, shoulder in and haunches in. As a result, you horse will have ‘four way stretch’!

