

DRESSAGE

COMMENT Pammy Hutton



WHILE enjoying an excellent standard of dressage in the sunshine at Badminton, it was interesting to discuss the possible development of tests for FEI horse trials.

Chris Bartle and Christoph Hess have circulated ideas on sequence changes — three changes, one every four strides, to be exact — medium canter with a change over X, and four-loop serpentine with a halt and rein-back at X plus strike-off to counter canter.

I was left to ponder whether all this is good forward planning or a step too far. Such new additions would be good for the fast-improving Germans — but will they suit the world?

Sequence changes were up for discussion in the 1970s, but they were thrown out. Nowadays,

◀ A flying change in medium canter is hell and back ▶

when the demands of judging dictate that horses land on one leg and need to change quickly, maybe they would be appropriate.

A flying change in medium canter is hell and back; many a dressage horse exploded when it was in our affiliated tests.

Loops with counter-canter and a pause at X appear acceptable, but that rein-back invariably causes tension, with many horses finding the movement difficult enough from walk.

It will be interesting to see how many of these movements are adopted. And with the balance and engagement required to perform them, how long will it be before a surface other than grass is requested as the norm?

Meanwhile, back at Badminton, I hinted that it might be useful to ascertain how many current judges can recognise correctness during a line of three changes — and count at the same time.

A bit cheeky, I know, but from my observations, not every late change was spotted, nor every correct one marked as such.

School of hard knocks

ADDINGTON Premier League saw me in the worst mood ever. Only two new loss — and the old ones not the

at awkward watching. Over the deserv



Changes to eventing's dressage have been mooted, but is this a good thing?

Having seen the video, I was lucky not to have been killed. My piaffe whip is no longer. It can happen to anyone who forgets that horses are just that — horses.

The bling thing

A celebration of equine "bling" (*Horse & Rider*, 10 May) had me working out what might suit our horses and what was over the top.

In truth, really clean tack is harder to achieve than a quick fix of glitter, while a proper shine on riders' boots reflects elbow grease.

Mind you, those diamante spurs did look fab, even if inclined to draw attention to a wayward leg.

Fashion watching enlivens many a show day. Long tails appear to be "out", perhaps because riders have realised how heavy they can be.

Manes with fewer plaits are "in", as are interesting quarter marks, although these should ideally show off the horse rather than the groom's imagination and artistic ability.

Even clothes become quickly out of date and the scramble to don the "look" never ceases.

Dressage's own fashion icon, Carl Hester, often sets the trends, but followers should note that they are never overdone and always enhance horse and rider.

Saved for another day

THE race is on for last-minute qualification for summer regionals. Even though entries have been as low as six or seven per class at some venues in our area of Gloucestershire, there's still a winner every time. My word,

Uno, dos, tres

everything else was fabulous.

This really well-run show must top my Premier League markings with a rarely given 9.5. A venue of the type many wish for at championship level, if the little niggles were corrected, it would warrant my first 10.

◀ Accidents can happen to anyone who forgets that horses are horses ▶

mood was a badly hurt chest wall and ribs. Ouch, ribs are a devil. But the story behind them is against myself because never did I think

I could make a misjudgement of such magnitude — not me!

Piaffe from a floor has always been one of my specialities.

those regionals will be full.

Anything from our stable not qualified is being saved for another year. Unless they've been off through injury, if they have been beaten to the post, these are not the

IT savvy

HOW'S this for a brilliant idea? Studying videos of tests enhanced by computer-drawn lines to help riders sit straighter and more correctly. Now that's a great use of World Class funding... H&H

As told to Liz Benwell

Centaur Biomechanics work with the BEF