

Experience Report about the First Performance Test for Baroque Horses in Petershagen 2015

On September 19./20. my Knabstrupper stallion Picasso vom Schimmerwald and I took part at the performance test for baroque type horses by the danish Knabstrupper association KNN, which for the first time was directed to horses/riders who would never accept parcours jumping, regarding it not as useful or even as damaging for their style of riding.

In the calm and nice atmosphere of this weekend my initially felt concerns about the other rules of the test rapidly faded or vanished completely!

The rule demanding to let a test rider on my horse, albeit only for 5 minutes, seemed preposterous to me: In my worst dreams I feared here would come s. o. who would pull in front and push from behind, and constantly compress my poor horse, showing off how much better he can educate him, and not listening to my advice at all! (As an academy rider always bears in mind the warning Guerinier's : „**The grace of a horse is like a flower: once wilted, it will never come back!**“ several times I mentally had composed a backing-off e-mail!).

But then fortunately it went the other way round: a fearless, calm and cautious rider, who easily followed my (s. t. overly cautious) advice, steering him rather too little than too much and staying relaxed nevertheless! At her start, Picasso naturally misinterpreted her try to urge him forward and showed a short, beautiful school-halt and the beginning of a levade, but then all went smoothly. To view her riding was pure joy to me as Picasso showed how well and gracefully he is capable to adjust to a new rider in all gaits (after all, he had been ridden by another rider than me only once for 2min in walk ever before!).

The loose jumping beforehand went much less stressful than I had imagined, too: I had always in my mind the picture of the way most riders conduct it: letting the horse loose and chasing it with the long whip into the jumping alley! I'm quite ashamed that the one time, I trained him before this year's test I had done it exactly this way (so perhaps it hasn't be a coincidence, that Picasso in the following 2 weeks at two times tried to speed off during canter in the country, which he had never done before!).

The danish exam commission then showed me (once again) a better way: leading the horse calmly near the first jump, then sending him into the jumping alley. This way I felt much better, not getting the feeling of totally loosing contact and to shoo the horse as with the former variant.

The dressage part where I showed Picasso in all gaits for me felt a little unaccustomed because of the gait-extensions, which I had not trained before. The middle trot would have demanded a rising trot after all, so here I didn't sit in a very elegant way, I fear!

The endurance test consists of ½ km walk, directly transforming into the 2.5 km trot which directly is followed by 1 km canter, everything time-bound. This felt unaccustomed, too, as I never had trained a full gallop before, but in spite of a pony-carriage coming against our riding direction in every one of the two canter rounds, everything went well here, too. The vet was pleased with 10min pulse-rate recovering after the test also.

My personal conclusion: the KNN is fully capable of assessing build and character of horses standing in the baroque/classical type very well and is also suited very well to conduct adequate performance tests not only for the show-sport, but also for the baroque-type Knabstrupper taking into account the horse's riding/education history and riding style..

My next stallion thus will be presented to the KNN grading committee, too.

Regarding my proposals for developing appropriate grading rules, I now have formulated them as follows:

The first and most important change has been conducted already: the voluntariness of the parcours jumping under the rider.

1. Motion for the KNN general assembly 2106: At the presenting and the performance test for baroque/classical Knabstrappers the use of a cavecon together with a bridle is allowed, with the reins fastened either to bridle or cavecon or both (= 2 pair of reins).
2. Motion for the KNN general assembly 2106: At the performance test for baroque/classical Knabstrappers the simultaneous use of whip and blunt spurs is allowed.
3. Motion for the KNN general assembly 2106: At the performance test for baroque/classical Knabstrappers horse and rider may use the tack they are used to, provided the horse is at least 6 years old.
4. Motion for the KNN general assembly 2106: At the performance test for baroque/classical Knabstrappers the loose jumping is voluntary, too. In it's place it is allowed to present lungeing or hand/groundwork to show the horse's capability for collection.

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I thank everyone very much, who made possible this nice grading, especially Ena Sparre and her grading team from Denmark, the family Enk, all helpers and, last but not least, the test rider Anne!