



EQUESTRIAN
CANADA
ÉQUESTRE



THE POWER OF PARA-DRESSAGE FROM THERAPY TO PODIUM

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ABOUT EQUESTRIAN CANADA

Equestrian Canada (EC) is the national governing body for equestrian sport and industry in Canada, with a mandate to represent, promote and advance all equine and equestrian interests. With over 16,000 Sport Licence Holders, 90,000 registered participants, 11 provincial/territorial sport organization partners and over 10 national equine affiliate organizations, EC is a significant contributor to the social, physical, emotional and economic wellbeing of the equestrian industry across Canada.

ABOUT PARA-DRESSAGE

For individuals with a physical disability, para-dressage can represent an opportunity to enjoy freedom and movement by learning to ride a horse, competing alongside peers and potentially progressing to high-level competitions, such as the Paralympics or World Equestrian Games.

Para-dressage has been a regular fixture at the Paralympics since 1996. With the idea of creating meaningful opportunities for all people with impairments to compete and achieve their goals in equestrian sport, athletes are classified according to the level of their impairment. In 2006, para-equestrian sport – including para-dressage – joined the ranks of the other seven disciplines regulated by the FEI.

Para-Dressage in Canada

EC's Para-Dressage Committee is responsible for developing programs for the Canadian para-dressage community from the grassroots to the international level.

Visit www.equestrian.ca/sport/para-dressage for more information.

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COVER
Sophie Lehoux-
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Jana Goldsmith



Laura Hall and Karen Pavicic - Photo Credit: ©EC/ Jamie-Ann Goodfellow

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INTRODUCTION TO PARA-DRESSAGE



Robyn Andrews
and Fancianna -
Photo Credit:
Susan J. Stickle

What is para-dressage?

The prefix “para-” means “parallel”. Parallel dressage is where technical ability counts, and the correct training of horse and rider are rewarded.

Para-dressage at all levels provides a sport and training system that creates opportunities to:

- Enjoy freedom and movement
- Compete alongside peers judged on skill and not level of impairment
- Progress to higher-level competitions or simply enjoy the sport recreationally
- Be assessed on your ability, not disability
- Compete in EC sanctioned able-bodied dressage competitions using approved compensatory aids

Who can participate?

Any individual can become involved in para-dressage if he or she:

- Was born with a disability
- Acquired a disability through an accident
- Has a deteriorating medical condition.

What are the benefits of para-dressage?

Some of the many benefits of para-dressage include:

- Providing the rider with goals and focus
- Improving or restoring self-confidence and feelings of satisfaction
- Developing the ability to work in partnership with horses to achieve success
- Developing the ability to acquire technical knowledge and skills
- Creating level and fair sporting competition

CANADA'S SPORT SYSTEM

Canada's sport system is very complex, and high-performance sport represents only a small part of this system. Sport is played at many levels ranging from children and adults participating in recreational sport, to youth training and competing provincially and nationally, to high performance athletes training full time to represent Canada internationally.

Many organizations play important roles in the journey from grassroots to the Olympic and Paralympic podium. Para-dressage provides the opportunity for riders to participate and compete at many stages.



Diana and Robyn
Andrews - Photo
Credit: Cealy
Tetley



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Ashley Gowanlock
and Di Scansano -
Photo Credit:
Equestrian Canada/
Jon Stroud

CANTRA/CLUB COACHES THERAPEUTIC CENTRES/RIDING CENTRES

| Includes | Appropriate LTED Stage/ Competition Goals |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to para-dressage sport • Lesson programs with CanTRA/therapeutic centre/riding centre coaches • Skill development and learning the use of compensating aids • Submitting an EC Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate for competition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Start • FUNdamental • Learn to Train • Train to Train • Learn to Compete • In-house schooling shows • EC Para-Dressage Video Competition Series • Bronze level EC competitions |



TALENT ID PHASE DEVELOPING ATHLETES PROGRAMS

| Includes | Appropriate LTED Stage/ Competition Goals |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of National Team Program framework and performance benchmark requirements • Introduction to structured para-dressage competitions • Talent ID athlete monitoring • Initial support for developing training and competition plan with personal coaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to Compete • Train to Compete • Learn to Win • Para-Dressage Dispensation certificate • Para-Dressage Classification • Regional, national and/or provincial championships • Silver/Gold level EC competitions • EC Para-Dressage Video Competition Series |



NATIONAL, DEVELOPMENT AND TALENT ID SQUADS NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM

| Includes | Appropriate LTED Stage/ Competition Goals |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily training environment supervised by Technical Leader • Integration of team and sport science support • Eligibility for Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program • Consideration for the Canadian Para-Dressage Team using designated selection criteria • Inclusion on the FEI Master List of International Classified Athletes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to Win • Train to Win • Live to Win • Paralympic Games (IPC, CPC) • World Equestrian Games (FEI) • International CPEDIs (FEI) |

ABOUT THE EC LONG-TERM EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL



Long-Term Equestrian Development (LTED) takes the proven concepts of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) framework, created by the Sport for Life Society, and applies them to equestrian sport. As a framework, LTED provides the Canadian equestrian community with a vision to help improve our infrastructure, programs and initiatives to ensure the best opportunities are available for all athletes and participants – whatever their personal goals or stage of development. It serves as our true north.

As detailed by Sport for Life, the LTED framework provides a clear pathway of developmental stages to help individuals, inclusive of those with a disability, pursue their goals in sport and physical activity.

Two extra LTED stages — Awareness and First Involvement – have been developed for athletes with a disability. These stages are particularly important for individuals with an acquired disability who may not be aware of the many sport and physical activities available to them. Those who acquire a disability generally

experience great change and transition, so some of their previous physical activities may no longer be an option. The Awareness stage informs the general public and prospective athletes with a disability of opportunities. Sport and recreation organizations need to publicize their programs and resources in order to reach their targeted populations.

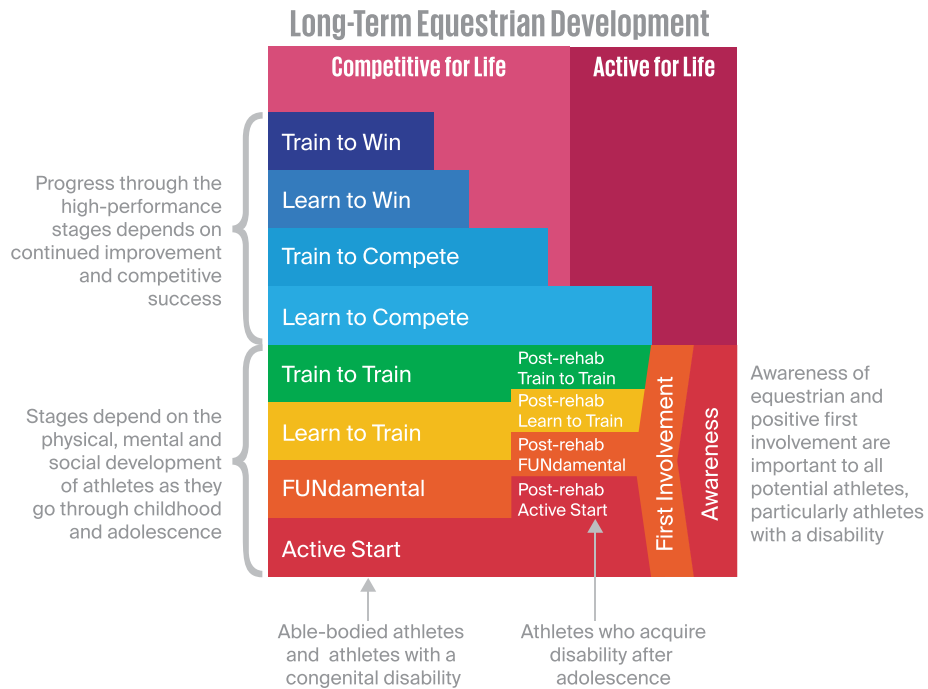
The First Involvement stage ensures that individuals with a disability have a positive first experience with an activity and remain engaged. Sport organizations need to train coaches and develop programs that provide suitable orientation for prospective athletes with a disability, helping them to feel confident and comfortable in their surroundings.

Inclusivity

- Beneficial to all levels of athletes, from recreational to high performance.
- Ensures the highest quality equestrian experience for everyone who engages in equestrian sport, including those with disabilities.
- Recognizes the essential roles played by parents, coaches, sponsors, breeders, officials, competition organizers, stable owners, horse owners, administrators, volunteers, sport scientists and other stakeholders.

Accessibility

- The framework is based on stages of development rather than age or years of experience, allowing anyone to join the pathway at any time regardless of age, ability or experience.
- LTED is available in digital format and free of charge at www.equestrian.ca/programs-services/lted, allowing anyone to download and utilize it at any time



Alignment

- Provides a systematic pathway for a new generation of Canadian athletes to compete successfully at the highest international level.
- Allows athletes, coaches, parents and stakeholders to work together toward a common pathway and goal.
- Helps to improve and align equestrian infrastructure, programs and initiatives to ensure the best opportunities for all athletes and participants, whatever their personal goals or stage of development.

Growth & Participation

- Assists in increasing participation in equestrian sport at both competitive and recreational levels.
- Encourages equestrians to stay involved throughout their lives.
- Designed to address and overcome the current shortcomings of equestrian sport – and the resulting consequences and impact.

Parents

- Provides an educational tool to help parents become familiar with the stages of development and support coaches who act in the best interest of the developing athlete.

- Better positions parents to ask important questions when selecting a coach, or purchasing or leasing a horse.

Coaches

- Provides a resource to encourage further education and assist in the development of coaching skills.
- Validates best practices and helps lead others to understand what is appropriate skill building at each stage of athlete development, and what competitions are appropriate.



Laura Hall -
Photo Credit:
©EC/ Jamie-Ann
Goodfellow



Hannah Carson
and Gypsy -
Photo Credit:
Erin McRae

TURNING RIDERS INTO ATHLETES



Nel Godin Keating
and Mr. Itchy -
Photo Credit:
Susan J. Stickle

Different stages of athlete development will require different time commitments, which can be referenced in the EC LTED model.

Self-motivation and natural athletic ability will determine the level at which an athlete can aspire to be successful. Many of us are motivated to develop good riding skills so that we can enjoy our horses and competition at the basic level; few are driven to participate in the international arena, which requires an enormous commitment of time, motivation, financial resources and energy. It is important that athletes and their families are aware of the commitments needed for each level of competition, and set realistic and attainable goals.

Most riders begin with weekly riding lessons. As their interest and skill level increases, the opportunity for additional guided practice sessions or more lessons is an option. As a general guideline, a rider who wishes to move into a competitive stream of equestrian sport is encouraged to have at minimum two guided

sessions, either as lessons or as supervised rides, per week in order to work toward competing at the EC Bronze level and higher.

The rider should be as involved as possible in preparing the horse before and after the session. Ideally, the rider should assist in general stable management. With assistance, most riders can help safely, and by doing so will develop a realistic idea of the commitment and work involved in riding as a sport.

Once basic riding skills are established, it is recommended that a rider takes private lessons and attends clinics with a coach who can assess his or her skill in relation to the various levels of competition, and also assist with establishing competition goals.

When starting to compete, a rider will need to develop a competition budget with the assistance of a coach so that everyone involved understands the costs and commitments related to the competition plan.

GUIDE TO ATHLETE CLASSIFICATION



Sue Foell and
Clive Milkins -
Photo Credit:
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Goodfellow

Classification introduces fairness and a level playing field based on impairment. It provides riders with a physical disability the opportunity to compete against other riders with similar challenges. The rules for classification are based on international guidelines for para sport and then made sports specific. Classification is not based on riding ability. Riders are assessed by accredited Classifiers and assigned a grade based on their functional abilities in areas such as muscle power, joint range and coordination. There are five grades of competition in para-dressage, with Grade I representing the more severely impaired riders and Grade V representing the least impaired riders.

During the classification process, riders may receive approval to use specific compensatory aids during competition, which would be listed on the rider's classification card. The purpose of compensatory aids (sometimes known as adaptive tack or specialized equipment) is to level the competitive playing field. Examples of compensatory aids include rubber bands on stirrups, voice commands or two whips. While compensatory aids are varied and can

be unique to a rider, they should never provide him or her with an advantage.

Athletes with minimal functional disability must meet the FEI criteria in order to compete in para-dressage events. As outlined in the FEI classification rules:

“Classification is neither intended to be comprehensive nor to be all encompassing. Para-Dressage classification is not by definition, inclusive; it is exclusive. Therefore, there is no legal liability to classify everybody. To say someone is ‘not eligible’ or ‘not classifiable’ is not to say they are not disabled. The severity of the disability is not in doubt, but some disabilities do not fit into the classification system.”

In order to receive classification, riders must meet the minimal disability criteria as outlined in the FEI classification rules, be actively competing in EC sanctioned Bronze level competitions and be pursuing competition at the Silver and Gold level in the immediate future.

Para-Dressage Classification Grades

Grade I - Athletes in Grade I have severe Impairments affecting all limbs and trunk. The Athlete usually requires the use of a wheelchair. They may be able to walk with an unsteady gait. Trunk and balance are severely impaired.

Grade II - Athletes in Grade II have either a severe Impairment of the trunk and minimal Impairment of the upper limbs or moderate Impairment of the trunk, upper and lower limbs. Most Athletes in this Grade use a wheelchair in daily life.

Grade III - Athletes in Grade III have severe Impairments in both lower limbs with minimal or no Impairment of the trunk or moderate Impairment of the upper and lower limbs and trunk. Some Athletes in this Grade may use a wheelchair in daily life.

Grade IV - Athletes in Grade IV have a severe Impairment or deficiency of both upper limbs or a moderate Impairment of all four limbs or short stature. Athletes in Grade IV are able to walk and generally do not require a wheelchair in daily life. Grade IV also includes Athletes having a visual Impairment equivalent to B1 with very low visual acuity and/or no light perception.

Grade V - Athletes in Grade V have a mild Impairment of movement or muscle strength or a deficiency of one limb or mild deficiency of two limbs. Grade V also includes Athletes with visual Impairment equivalent to B2 with a higher visual acuity than visually impaired Athletes competing in Grade IV and/or a visual field of less than 5 degrees radius.

Riders should become classified when they are intending to compete in EC Silver, Gold or FEI international para-dressage competitions.

Riders who are interested in becoming classified should contact the EC para-dressage department to request the classification information package. Riders must complete a classification request form, a consent for classification form, and a certificate of diagnosis form in preparation for classification.

The athlete must satisfy the Classification Advisory Group that he or she has an eligible impairment. The Classification Advisory Group will then assess whether or not an athlete meets the minimum impairment criteria. This takes place as part of a pre-evaluation prior to participating in the classification evaluation.

Compensatory Aids/Adaptive Tack

Compensating aids are used by riders to compensate for the physical or sensory limitation resulting from their impairment, thereby enabling them to ride a horse.

A compensating aid is not to be used to compensate for lack of riding skill or as an aid to enhance the horse's performance, but would be considered a training aid. The well-being of the horse is paramount in considering the use of any compensating aid.

Riders are encouraged to be as able as possible and to only use compensating aids where necessary. The use of appropriate compensating aids is discussed with individual riders during the classification process and will be documented on the para-dressage classification profile.

It is the responsibility of each competitor to ensure that all compensating aids used in competition have been approved and are documented correctly on their para-dressage classification profile. Approval of any compensating aid is dependent on whether the equipment and/or modification to equipment or specific aids are permitted for the riders Profile and Grade, and whether it is safe and considers the well-being of the horse.

Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate

The Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate allows competitors with a physical impairment to compete at EC Bronze level dressage competitions with the use of compensating (adaptive) aids.

Exception: Athletes with hearing loss may use the EC Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate at Bronze, Silver and Gold level competitions.

The Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate will be issued annually and include the athlete's name, approved compensating aids and expiration date.

It is the responsibility of the athlete to request, in writing, the renewal of the Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate. Renewal requests are to be required to be submitted two weeks prior to the dispensation certificate expiry date.

Para-Dressage Classification Master List

The EC Para-Dressage Classification Master List is posted on the EC website at www.equestrian.ca/sport/para-dressage/programs for access by athletes, competition organizers and officials. The list includes athlete name, profile grade, compensating aids, classification status and review date if required. EC will be responsible for maintaining the list to include up-to-date and strictly relevant details. The list will be updated monthly or as required.

Classified para-dressage athletes holding a current EC Sport Licence are able to print a copy of their classification profile through MyEC.

GETTING STARTED IN PARA-DRESSAGE COMPETITION



Roberta Sheffield and Bailaor - Photo Credit: Cealy Tetley



Kim Scott and Adam - Photo Credit: Rachel Brears

To get started in para-dressage competition, you will need:

- Access to a sound, suitable horse with a great temperament, good paces and good basic training
- A safe training environment
- A coach with some dressage experience
- Up-to-date, correctly fitted headgear
- Safe and comfortable riding attire

COMPETITION CLOTHING



Roberta Sheffield -
Photo Credit: ©EC/
Jessie Christie

Ideally, riders should be prepared to purchase their own clothing and equipment as they progress. Being familiar with and comfortable in specific riding attire is important in the competition arena, regardless of the competition level.

The minimum requirements are:

- A well maintained and well fitted riding helmet
- Sturdy boots with a heel
- Riding jodhpurs or breeches

If tall boots are not worn, half-chaps protect and provide stability for the lower leg, and present a neat and tidy appearance. Shirts should be tucked in and have a collar and sleeves.

For lessons, in-house competitions or video competitions, it is acceptable to wear a shirt with a vest or close-fitting sweater or golf shirt. The colour should be muted with no pictures, pattern, or printing. For local competitions and higher, riding jackets are usually required. Gloves should be worn when riding where ever possible.

Many centres accept used riding clothing in good condition as a donation, with the exception of helmets. These items can be made available to riders for a small price, or borrowed and returned once they are no longer required or outgrown. Some tack shops offer a beginner package of riding attire for a reasonable price. Investigate this availability in your area. For more information on rider attire, consult Section E: Dressage and Para-Dressage of the EC Rules for dress requirements at the Bronze level and up.



Clive Millkins
and Kim Scott -
Photo Credit:
©EC/Caroline
Soble

ENGAGING OTHER EXPERTS



Caroline Archambault – National Team Program Human and Equine Massage Therapist - Photo Credit: ©EC/Jamie-Ann Goodfellow

In addition to a strong coaching team, there are many other experts whose knowledge and expertise should be integrated into a rider's training and competition program. Therapies away from the horse can bring benefits to riding.

Examples of experts who can positively enhance performance and provide great benefit for competitive riders of all levels include:

- Physiotherapists
- Massage therapists
- Fitness coaches/trainers
- Sport psychologists/mental performance specialists
- Nutritionists

COMPETITION HORSES



Winona Hartvikson and Ultimo - Photo Credit: Betty Cooper

The horse is a significant component of all equestrian activity, as it is the other half of the team. It is very important that the para-dressage horse is regularly trained by an experienced rider, trainer or coach. Coaches should always err on the side of safety: if necessary, the horse should be lunged or ridden before the rider gets on. Riders in Grade I, II and III always have the option of having a coach or designated rider warm up the horse before they ride at a competition. Grade IV and V riders are not permitted to have their horse warmed during a competition, but may have the horse lunged by a suitable member of their support team.

Horses may not be led during dressage tests; the rider must be independent, with the exception of Grade I, II and III riders, who may have a handler for some video competitions. However, riders must be in control of their riding, with the horse handler intervening only in an emergency.

A competition horse must be forward and keep themselves going. If riders need to use all their strength in getting the horse to go, they will have no strength left to ride the horse correctly through a competition test. The horse's walk must be four-beat and marching. The horse must be attentive to the aids and willing to listen to the rider's aids for turning and transitions. The trot must be two-beat and should be rhythmic and balanced. The horse must be light in the hand. This may not sound like many of the therapy horses in your barn, but with a regular schooling program, most horses will develop a correct way of going and make good competition horses. Schooling with an experienced trainer, coach or rider should be a regular component of every therapy horse's routine to ensure their physical and mental well-being. Horses ridden round and forward maintain their muscle tone, condition and top line. Correct schooling reinforces their training and confirms the correct way for them to go.

CARING FOR THE COMPETITION HORSE



Lauren Barwick and Off To Paris - Photo Credit: Susan J. Stickle

The primary aim in caring for the competition horse is to produce a happy, healthy, obedient, safe and confident partnership. Good veterinary care in all areas, with particular attention to having teeth and feet checked regularly and ensuring that the horse is pain-free, is essential for all horses. In the competitive category, everything mentioned above creates a strong foundation upon which the competitive horse must build. Without this, a horse cannot advance or do well in competition. Additionally, the rider has to understand how that foundation is built, as well as master the correct position and correct use of aids, to be able to ride the horse appropriately and well.

Examples of experts whose knowledge and expertise should be integrated into a horse's training and competition program to keep the

competition horse healthy, happy and sound include:

- Veterinarians to keep the competition horse healthy
- Chiropractors, massage therapists or physiotherapists to help with skeletal-muscular issues and assist with maintaining an older horse for a longer period of time
- Farriers to manage the soundness of the horse in consultation with the veterinarian
- Saddle fitting experts to assist in ensuring that the saddle fits both horse and rider
- Trainers if the horse has training-related issues

TACK REQUIREMENTS



Photo Credit:
©EC/ Jamie-Ann
Goodfellow

Suitable, properly-fitted equipment is essential. Para-dressage riders may be permitted to use compensating aids depending on their impairment. These must be identified on the rider's classification card and approved by the classifier. Riders should use only the aids that they need to ride effectively; the aids should not give them an advantage over other riders.

The saddle must fit both the horse and the rider, and should put the rider in a functional riding position. If the rider is putting too much energy into staying in the correct riding position in the saddle, he or she will have no energy left to ride. When considering adaptations to saddles, riders and coaches are encouraged to consult the EC Rules and/or a classifier, as there are strict guidelines for saddle adaptations. Side saddles may be used.

Bridles should also be properly fitted. Check the brow band and noseband for a comfortable

fit. Dressage tests are ridden in either a snaffle or a double bridle. The double bridle is used in the advanced stages of a horse's training. If you are lucky enough to obtain this level of horse for your rider in competition, you may find that the horse is more comfortable and lighter in a double bridle. Consult the EC Rule Book to ensure that the bits used are permitted in competition. There must be a picture of the bit in the EC Rule Book; otherwise, it is not approved. For more information on tack requirements, consult Section E: Dressage and Para-Dressage of the EC Rules.

Where a double bridle is allowed, the welfare of the horse must come first. The judges may ask for the bridle to be changed to a snaffle if they feel that the use of the double bridle is a detriment to the safety and welfare of the horse.

THE ROLE OF THE THERAPEUTIC RIDING COACH



Pat Bullock
and Stephanie
Coveart - Photo
Credit: Peter
Thomas

The pathway to para-dressage can begin when an athlete first sits on a horse. He or she may be riding for therapy, to strengthen weak muscles, to improve balance and coordination, or to mobilize the hips and pelvis. A few years later, this same rider could develop significantly to attain the level of fitness and interest in riding needed in order to compete.

During the time that a rider is engaged in a therapeutic riding program, he or she will

have gained many skills that will facilitate a smoother transition into a sport program. Keep in mind that fitness level and core strength will be relative to the abilities of each rider. The fitness level of a Grade I rider will be quite different from that of a Grade V rider. The Grade I rider will find it just as difficult to perform the required movements of the Grade I walk test correctly as the Grade V rider does performing the higher level movements.



Sarah Cummings
and Amada
Kalvoda - Photo
Credit: ©EC/
Jamie-Ann
Goodfellow

LESSON PLANS

Fundamental Sport Skills

Always start a rider correctly. Teach him or her to hold the reins correctly, to lengthen and shorten reins, run up stirrups, loosen girth and lead the horse back to the stall, considering the activities that are appropriate for each individual rider's abilities. Develop a rider's skills through a progressive system; integrate the LTED model depending on the rider's age and level of competence.

As the rider acquires balance and becomes accustomed to the movement, relaxation allows him or her to follow the horse's movement with the seat and pelvis – that is the stability component. Once the rider is stable in halt and walk, it is time to progress in trot. Use appropriate support and encourage a correct riding position to the extent the rider is able. Make frequent position corrections. Practice does not make perfect; perfect practice makes perfect. Games that riders can play with tools such as rings and balls improve balance, coordination and motor skills. By the time a rider has progressed to a saddle, he or she has acquired solid basics, a suitable fitness level and core strength. Start young riders correctly; mistakes are much harder to correct later on.

Teach correct aids for all paces, transitions, and school figures. Do not overload the rider with too much information. Progress only when the rider has mastered basic skills. Emphasize correct and effective riding position and accuracy at all times.

Development of Progressive Lesson Plans for Horses/Riders

An important part of any rider's sport development plan is establishing short- and long-term goals. Goals are targets to work towards and increase incentive as well as fuel personal motivation. Competition is useful in recognizing when goals have been attained. Behind each successful performance have been many at-home sub-goals and objectives. Immediate goals should be specific and

measurable. Think of short-term goals as baby steps to reach the long-term goals.

Each rider needs to know what skills and resources he or she must have to be successful on the path to the ultimate goal. For example, the rider needs to know that the canter will not be introduced until he or she can maintain balance and contact in the walk and trot.

Lunging the rider is a good way to improve position. The coach can control the movement of the horse and the rider can concentrate on using the correct aids. A coach who is EC certified as an Instructor of Beginners or will have the knowledge to lunge a rider safely and effectively. For coaches who do not have the minimum EC coaching certification, the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA) offers a lunging certification that includes an extensive curriculum on the subject of lunging a rider safely and effectively. Lunging must be done on a safe, quiet horse with the training necessary to teach the required paces.

Private lessons are optimal, but not always possible. Several riders with similar goals and levels of ability can also make good progress riding in a semi-private lesson. In a class of more than two riders, progress will be slower, depending on the size of the class, but can be achieved providing the riders are motivated and the coach has a well-organized plan.

Drill riding with a group is an excellent way to improve skills through a fun and engaging activity. Riders working as a group must work as a team to keep the same distances by increasing and decreasing length of stride, maintaining accuracy of school figures (e.g. circles and serpentines) and riding through corners.

Always build on basic skills to make steady, solid progress. If a new skill is difficult for a rider, go back a step or two and make sure those skills are confirmed. Riders must maintain their confidence, interest, and motivation through each step of training in order to continue the learning process.

CREATING COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RIDERS



Lauren-Barwick
and Engelbrecht -
Photo Credit:
Susan J. Stickle

Examples of Introductory Sport Opportunities

There are many ways that therapeutic riding centres and instructors can introduce competition to individuals with a disability. For example:

- Initiating in-house/fun-day competitions at your facility
- Including lower-level classes during existing shows, such as a lead-line or walking classes,
- so that more riders can participate in competitions
- Asking a local club or competition to include classes for riders with a disability
- Participating in the EC Para-Dressage Video Competition Series
- Participating in Bronze level EC competitions



How to Organize an In-house Fun Day Competition

In-house fun day competitions can be fun and are easy to organize. Develop a program of classes for your competition. Keep the list short: three to five classes should give everyone a variety from which to choose. The number of classes a rider can enter will be governed by the number of riders competing on a horse. (If 30 riders are entered and you have 10 suitable horses, it is reasonable to estimate that each horse will have three riders). Divide each class into two or three sections:

- Riders requiring a leader and one or two side walkers
- Riders requiring a leader
- Riders who are independent

Good examples of classes are a leading pattern, an obstacle course, an equitation class, and a pole class. Send the program and an entry form home with each rider and ask that it be returned by a certain date so you can estimate the number of riders entered. Ask a knowledgeable coach or horse person in your area to judge. Be prepared to explain the classes and answer any questions they may have about judging riders with a disability. Ask volunteers to help set up the courses, groom and tack up horses, and help with the classes on the day.

If you have riders who are independent, they may like to help with show preparation. Horses always need grooming, and their tack cleaned.

Purchase ribbons – these do not have to be elaborate rosettes, but can be straight ribbons or recycled ribbons that have been donated. Keep your first in-house competition fun, simple, and small. It takes a few people to pull this off, but volunteers love to be involved in such events and parents love watching their riders demonstrate the skills they have learned.

Participating in the EC Para-Dressage Video Competition Series

The EC Para-Dressage Video Competition Series provides riders of all levels and abilities the opportunity to experience competition conditions in the comfort of their home stable and on a familiar horse. Riders are judged by para-dressage judges against similar riders nationwide and are eligible to place and win great prizes.

Video competitions encourage riders to develop effective riding skills and provide them with the opportunity to compete in a progressive and structured environment. They are a fantastic way to ensure that all riders across Canada, no matter how geographically isolated, have the chance to compete. Competition is an integral part of athlete development and provides riders with new goals as well as a sense of empowerment and accomplishment.

All riders with a physical and/or intellectual impairment are welcome to compete in the Para-Dressage Video Competition Series, and do not need to be classified in order to compete. To participate, riders simply have themselves recorded performing a specific dressage test and upload it to the Para-Dressage Video Competition Portal, along with an online registration form and the appropriate entry fees.

There are no tack restrictions: English or Western tack is permitted, as well as any adaptive equipment that is required. Tack must be safe and comfortable for both horse and rider. The rider must not be attached to the horse or saddle in any way that is deemed unsafe, as per FEI para-equestrian rules. Rules are available online at www.equestrian.ca/programs-services/rules. Any type of saddle or surcingle, which is appropriate for the needs of the rider, may be used. Additional information and guidelines can be found in the Para-Dressage Video Information document on the EC website.

Aly Keay and
Manny - Photo
Credit: Jodi Sware



The results of each competition will be posted on the EC website at www.equestrian.ca/sport/para-dressage/programs. Prizes are awarded to competitors who finish in the top three places in their class for each competition. Each competitor will receive a copy of the judge's scores and comments on their test.

Participating in Introductory Levels of Competition

Coaches should have some competition background in the equestrian discipline they are teaching. Riders must be able to follow instructions and ride the required movements in individual sequence.

Always start riders at a level they are competent at riding; lower-level competition allows riders to challenge the level they are able to successfully compete in. It is the responsibility of the rider and the coach to be familiar with the rules; for Canada, reference EC Section E: Dressage and Para-Dressage Rules.

Participating in a Local/Regional Competition

A good activity to help riders develop an understanding of the culture of equestrian sport is to spend time as spectators at a local dressage show. The time spent discussing ring etiquette in the warm-up area, competition attire, horse turn-out and executing the test will help riders envision their first experience competing away from the home barn. Observing good riders has excellent value. An environment where riders are learning and competing at a higher level is very important.

Plan early and communicate with the dressage show's Organizing Committee. Check that the venue is accessible for your rider. Be willing to help with changing ring sizes or any other adaptations that are needed. It may be advisable to take copies of your para-dressage test. On the day of the show, have enough helpers available to assist. Volunteers are usually willing to be involved at a horse show. The horse should be settled and well-schooled

at the venue, so arrive early in case you need more time than anticipated. The horse should be schooled with any adaptive equipment the rider is using before the rider mounts. Take your own mounting block. If your rider is classified, attach a copy of the classification profile to the entry. The classification profile must be carried by the rider and available to the steward or designated representative immediately following completion of the rider's test. Adaptive equipment that is not listed on the classification profile is not allowed. If the rider is not classified, any adaptive equipment should be stated on their approved Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate and submitted on the entry form.

Participating in a National Competition

All riders are encouraged to enter national para-dressage classes held at EC sanctioned competitions, but the rider should compete at the highest level of his or her current riding ability to facilitate the development of effective riding skills. While all riders should be classified at the beginning stages of competition, it is not necessary to be classified at the Bronze level.

Sarah Cummings
and L.Dorado -
Photo Credit:
Susan J. Stickle



Lee Garrod and
Question 2 -
Photo Credit:
Susan J. Stickle

Susan J. Stickle
ARTIST SIGNATURE

PARA-DRESSAGE COMPETITION TESTS

The EC para-dressage tests are designed for riders at all levels. Those riding at the novice level can ride whichever test is compatible with their abilities.

EC Bronze Competition Tests

The following EC para-dressage national tests are to be used in EC Bronze competitions:

- **Walk Tests (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3)** – For athletes who wish to compete at the walk.
- **Walk/Trot Tests (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3)** – For athletes who wish to compete at the walk and trot.
- **Walk/Trot/Canter Tests (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3)** – For athletes who wish to compete at the walk, trot and canter.

Athletes are not required to be classified to compete at EC Bronze competitions, they are required, however, to submit a completed EC Para-Dressage Dispensation Certificate if using compensating aids.

EC Silver and Gold Competition Tests

EC Silver and Gold level competitions may use the EC para-dressage national tests and/or the FEI para-dressage tests, including the FEI Introductory Test A (Grade I – V), and the FEI Introductory Test B (Grade I – V).

Athletes are required to be classified to compete in EC Silver, Gold and Platinum competitions.

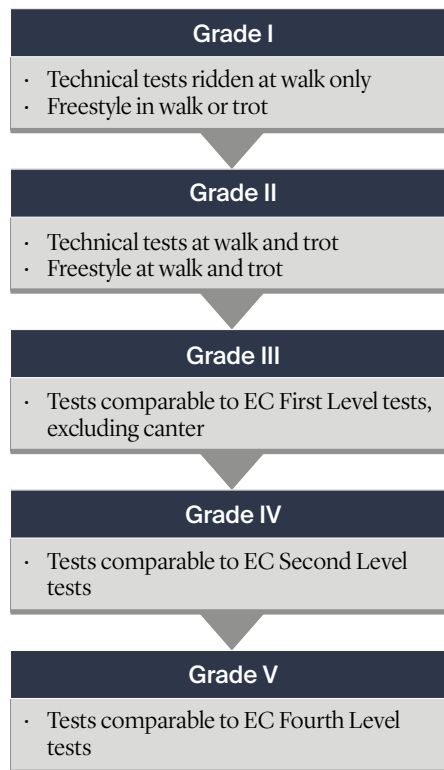
EC (FEI) Platinum Competition Tests

EC Platinum level competitions must use the FEI Para-dressage tests:

- Novice Test A (Grade I-V) – for CPEDI 1* or 2* competition only
- Novice Test B (Grade I-V) – for CPEDI 1* or 2* competition only

- Technical Tests (Team & Individual Tests - Grade I-V)
- Freestyle Tests (Grade I – V)

FEI Para-Dressage Tests



National para-dressage tests and FEI para-equestrian dressage tests are available for download in the para-dressage section of the EC website at www.equestrian.ca/sport/para-dressage/tests.