

JUDGES' FORUM 2014

9/24/2014

I just returned from the Dressage Judges' Forum. It was well organized, well directed, and depressing.

Janet Foy was the director, and did a very good job of helping people from L grads to S judges. She was pragmatic and honest, and did not put people down. I have been attending and conducting national and international judges' forums for 40 years, and I appreciated Janet's way of dealing with her group.

The classes we watched and judged were filled with a lot of very good horses with good conformation and good movement. Unfortunately, there were none that could be called 'on the bit' or 'stretched to contact.' They were ubiquitously depressed in the base of the neck and severely behind the vertical with rigid backs. There were a very few that were not wadded behind the vertical, but they had necks like I-beams.

When I said that the horses that Janet was scoring in the high 6's and 7's, I would not get out of the 5 range, she said something telling: "That is how judging is going these days." She was not judgmental or defensive, just factual.

That is the depressing part. Athleticism is no substitute for correct training, in my view, but clearly I am in the minority.

Poor basic training seems to matter little, if the horse does some version of the tricks and is a wowser in movement. Pity.

Kudos to Janet for her straight forwardness. Shame on the powers that be (especially the FEI) for steering dressage down a bad path.

I've said for years that the judges are ultimately responsible for the bad direction of dressage. This experience just verified and magnified that.

J. Moore