

Erica Poseley Clinic

By Tami Hoag

Got seat? Seems a silly question to anyone who rides—especially to riders in the discipline of dressage. But for **Erica Poseley**, a popular clinician from Santa Cruz, who specializes in improving the rider's position and effectiveness of the aids, this is a question all riders need to ask themselves.

Poseley's education began 30 years ago on the island of Maui, Hawaii, where she used to steal pop bottles off porches to cash in on the deposit so she could buy rides at a local ranch.

Years of catch riding and little formal instruction ingrained a number of incorrect patterns in her riding—which, ironically, has made her a better teacher. "You perfect what you practice," she says. "Good or bad." She knows what it is to struggle and work through her own bad habits to become a better rider.

When she decided to dedicate herself to that end, Poseley went straight to the fatherland of proper dressage—Germany—to train at the famed **Reitinstitut von Neindorff**. In the German system everything begins with the rider's seat. At von Neindorff, the seat was taught on the lunge. Poseley spent hours and hours of lessons on the lunge line.

Says Poseley, "On the lunge, the rider has the time and freedom to concentrate on position and on how little it actually takes to influence the horse in a positive or negative way."

Poseley first teaches her students to truly follow the movement of the horse with their seat, then moves on to arm exercises to work for an independence of seat and upper body.

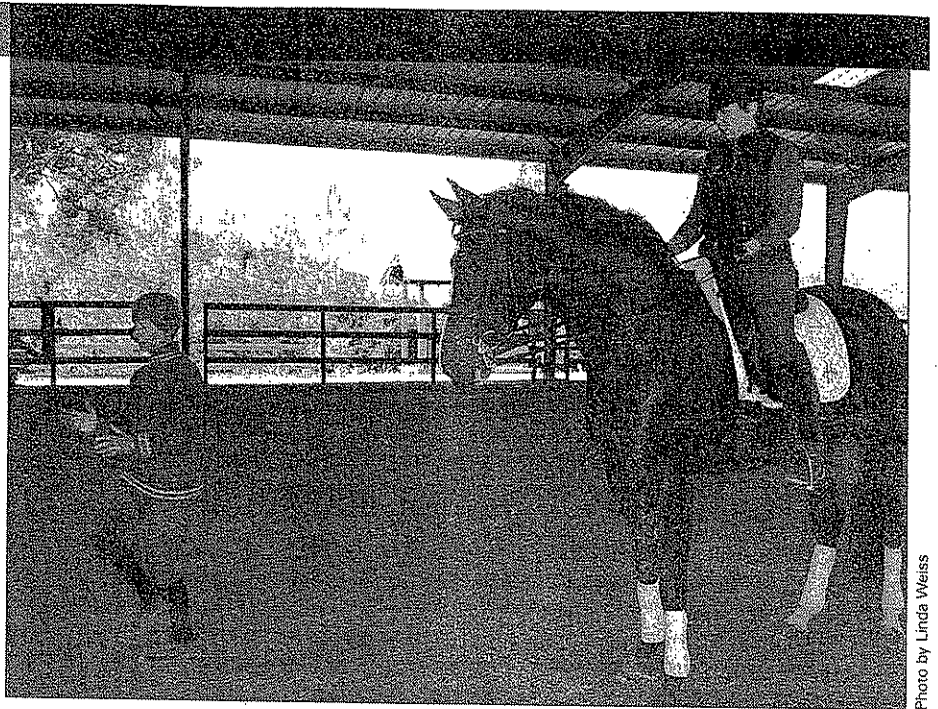


Photo by Linda Weiss

Above, Erica Poseley demonstrates a movement for Tami Hoag at a recent clinic at Iron Horse Ranch. Below, Poseley adjusts the rider's leg position.

Working the horse first in side reins, hand to bit contact comes later. With a well-established, independent seat, the rider is less apt to hang on the horse's mouth—a common bad habit that encourages the horse to go on the forehead as he looks for relief from the rider's hand.

"What many American trainers and riders believe, unfortunately, is that working on the lunge is a demotion," Poseley says. "Lunge work is beneficial to riders of every level, from beginners through Olympians."

Poseley points to other sports for examples of ongoing basic training. Tennis, skiing, martial arts: in all of these sports even the elite athlete spends hours and hours developing and refreshing the basic skills.

It was on the lunge that Poseley's interest in the biomechanics of the seat and the timing of the aids began to take root. In her quest for knowledge, she has studied and worked with such notable teachers as **Dietrich von Hopffgarten**,

Melissa Simms, Mary Wanless, Jeff Moore and Liz Searle, and her primary mentor, **Sandy Howard**.

Erica Poseley clinics regularly in the Malibu area. For more information go to www.gotseat.com. 🐾



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