

My Advice: Accept Only Substitutes

Think of all the bandwagons you could have jumped onto over the years. The Mitt Romney one. (Ed Muskie, if you're older than dirt!). The Washington Redskins. Arsenio Hall. Maybe you've noticed that the dressage world is not without them either.

Now I'm the last one to cast stones. George Redinger described my book as: "slightly above average content differentiated from its competition by an abundance of clever self promotion." So if someone else is successfully selling the sizzle, I shouldn't be complaining. But, REALLY! Sometimes I just shake my head—no wonder Osama is unhappy with us.

Case in point: an item recently seen on a "dressage horsemanship" website advertising "The Schoolmaster Noodle Kit for Learning Lateral Positions." The ad continues: "a kit for turning a pool noodle into a schoolmaster . . . includes head, tail, handles, a trademark sticker you can apply (!), and a place to attach the 76 page workbook (on 3' by 5" cards) while you're doing the exercises . . . plus a 30 minute DVD . . . *pool noodle not included.*"

What, no steak knives?

Learning tools are great, but this one costs 60 dollars plus shipping and handling. And you have to go buy your own damn noodle. As I said, I am not one to quibble over the bounties conferred upon us by the free enterprise system. I've always marveled, for instance, at anyone who can sell you a piece of string for 20 dollars and charge you an extra 35 for the orange stick you attach it to. Why didn't I think of that? No imagination. Insufficient chutzpah. Not enough savvy.



But this time I'm ready. If you want to acquire the same knowledge without traipsing down the pool noodle path, I have two solutions. The first is a bargain basement one. This is like those shareware anti-virus programs you can download off the web for free. Just open your USEF Rulebook to pages eight through eleven. And buy, borrow, or steal a pipe cleaner. It will be unpretentious. It won't keep you afloat. But it (and the Rulebook diagrams) will let you accomplish everything the Noodle Kit will at a savings of approximately 59 dollars and 97 cents. And you can practice at your desk when your boss isn't looking.

Now I know that not every dressage rider feels comfortable at the prospect of saving money. Because the pipe cleaner won't have a logo on it. And if it's not expensive, how can it be any good? So I'm offering you a second solution. For approximately \$500,000 you can buy a Prevost H5-60 Articulating Bus, and if you drive it on icy roads, it will perform all the lateral movements that the Rulebook contains. AND the programmable LED signage above the windshield will advertise to anyone watching just which lateral movement you are attempting.



So there you go. Go cheap or go dear. But don't compromise. As Sigmund Freud is purported to have said, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." And so it is with noodles. You can dress one up, but it still won't be a schoolmaster.