

Spots?

With scant explanation some people can intuit the complex interspecies communication needed to produce real dressage. But not everyone.

I have a fortyish student whom I've known for years who recently purchased a very small pony for her year-old daughter. The pony came with a two wheeled cart and all the harness, so mom and child can tool around the farm together, and the little one can grow up to be as horse crazy as her mother. It's a good plan.

At a recent dressage show I was introduced to the former owner of the pony, a ten year old girl, and her mother who had come to see the new owner, my student, ride her Prix St. George.

The test was elegant, right on the cusp of 70 percent. After watching it, the kid's mother approached me for advice. Her daughter, she explained, was a *very* proficient rider in all disciplines. She "knew hunt seat and pleasure, she was learning park (*Oh, God, I thought!*), and her new horse which she was moving up to, a 24 year old large pony of Arabian breeding, could do Fourth Level dressage." A trusting soul, I always believe everything I'm told.

The woman's question to me: "Can you recommend a book where we can learn all the spots?"

"The spots," I repeated, wondering if I had misheard her.

"Yes, we want to learn the spots," she confirmed.

My mind briefly touched on an image of an arena diagram with the letters marked out. No, that wasn't it.

She continued, "We need a book to learn the spots where we touch him to make him do everything."

"Ah . . ."



For once, words failed me.

Too late I thought, "Dang, if only he'd been a leopard App," envisioning him plastered with Post-It notes to mark what movement pushing on each spot would produce.