

# BEYOND THE BELL

The NSW Judges Journal

Vol 4



## ***BEST WISHES FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON!***

Welcome to the December 2025 edition of the NSW Judges Journal, Beyond the Bell. With hot days forecast this summer after a very hot spring, it's a great time for a bit of reading, video watching and hopefully time to review some sessions on Engage.

The new rules workshop will be held via zoom on 20 January to get everyone off to a great start in 2026.

The Workshops held in October (Freestyle Workshop) and November (Bells and Bloopers) were a great success - thank you to presenters and everyone who attended.

A heartfelt thank you to all our contributors who helped make the inaugural year of BEYOND THE BELL such a success! There is plenty more to come in 2026.

If you have any topics you'd like covered or stories to share in 2026, please contact me via email at [mjdoyle034@gmail.com](mailto:mjdoyle034@gmail.com) or on 0414 991599.

I hope you've enjoyed Beyond the Bell during 2025. Wishing you a happy festive season filled with loved ones and good cheer, Mel.

## **OVER THE PAGE**

In this edition, we'll:

- get an update on JSC news;
- see who's moved through the ranks;
- hear from Sue Scaysbrook and Jobina Kennedy in the third and final edition of our Through the Paces series looking at Canter and its variations;
- hear from our A level judge Jobina Kennedy about the FEI seminar held in Sydney;
- check upcoming events;
- visit I.T corner for computerised scoring tips; and
- see an update on Engage.

## NSW Judges Sub-Committee News

### Changing of the Guard

The 2025 JSC had a very busy year running the super seminar In February 2025, the CDI Workshop in April and many regional seminars in 2025 as well as new online Workshops. All of which had fabulous attendance by you.

We've also seen the upgrading of 13 Judges, which included the addition of 5 new G level judges to our ranks.

Under the charter of the JSC, the JSC undergoes an expression of interest and reappointment process each year. As a result, you will have a new JSC for 2026. There will certainly be familiar faces and some new faces as well. The new JSC will be moving forward under the leadership of Ann-Maree Lourey. Julie Jones, our previous Chair, is no longer on the NSW Dressage Judges Committee, hence, she is no able to continue as our Chair and is taking a break after many years of volunteering on both state and national dressage committees. Julie would like to thank all of her 2025 JSC colleagues for their hard work, passion, and enthusiasm for improving Judge Education in NSW and wishes Ann-Maree and the 2026 JSC all the best in continuing to support our NSW judges.

## CONGRATS TO RECENT UPGRADES!

We've had a fabulously successful year for upgrades in 2025 with the following judges completing upgrades at Nationals:

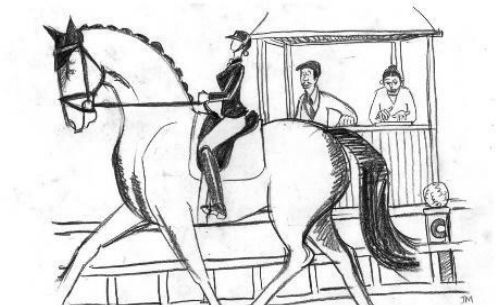
Deborah Colbran - C Level

Maxine Cummings – C Level

Sue Lowe -C Level

Kelly O'Keefe – C Level

Jacqui Melbourne – D Level



*Artwork by Jacqui Melbourne*

In 2025 we had 13 judges successfully upgrade.

While you're on your summer break and when it comes time for new years resolutions, maybe starting or finishing an upgrade could be on the list. Perhaps team up with a buddy or two as Deb and Sue did (it obviously worked!).

If you've completed the minimum judging requirements at your current level and are considering an upgrade in 2026, make sure you review the upgrading rules in our National Dressage Rules in formulating your plan.

# THROUGH THE PACES - CANTER

by Sue Scaysbrook & Jobina Kennedy

## THE CANTER AND ITS VARIATIONS

Following on from our last two articles in our Paces series, we now look at the Canter.

### THE CANTER

The three-beat canter rhythm has an asymmetrical footfall sequence which can make the canter susceptible to rhythm impurities, but the canter can also show sheer brilliance as well. If cantering to the right, the footfall of the stride is, left hind first, then right hind and left fore simultaneously, then right fore before the all-important moment of suspension or “jump/air time” when all four feet are in the air. The longer the suspension phase, emanating from an active hind end and supple back, the more spectacular a horse’s medium or extended canter will be and the more expressive his flying changes are likely to be.



It is imperative that the canter stride be allowed by the rider to show freedom and elasticity. A rider needs to be confident to allow the horse to move in his own natural way without being pushed beyond his natural rhythm and tempo or, on the other hand, be ridden in a way that prohibits his natural stride through a confining hand – a common expression is “riding with the hand brake on” - which flattens the moment of suspension, impairs impulsion and can easily affect the pure rhythm of the pace.

The canter should always be regular, light, uphill, united, balanced, equal on both reins and moved into without any hesitation.

The variations within the canter gait are Working Canter, Lengthening of steps, Collected Canter, Medium Canter and Extended Canter.

The Working Canter, shown in the first levels of Preliminary and Novice tests, is the pace between collected and medium canter and is characterised by the ability to maintain the correct rhythm consistently throughout the movements and transitions. The horse will show acceptance of the bridle with a supple poll and back, engaged hindquarters with good articulation of the hocks, allowing him to develop his natural balance and remain straight on two tracks. Showing the correct education of the *first phase of training – “understanding and confidence”* in the maintenance of the *Rhythm* and the development of *Suppleness* and *Contact*, is the basis on which to build the education of the dressage horse. Suppleness in the Working Canter can be seen when the horse moves in rhythm over a

swinging back and is free from anxiety and tension – a soft, swinging tail is often evident. The horse shows a relaxed facial expression and is confidently accepting a



light contact. Freedom and elasticity of the steps and the ability to show adjustability is a basic element of the canter. At Working Canter, the horse's frame should show the ability to carry some weight on the hindquarters and not show a tendency to balance on the forehand and as the horse progresses in his training, his self-carriage will be improved and become more uphill in attitude. At this stage of his training, the horse may not be physically strong enough to maintain absolute straightness at all times and this should be looked upon with a degree of grace, particularly in 4 Year Old Young Horse tests.

At Novice level, the horse is required to show some lengthened strides in canter. This exercise is shown coming from a 15 meter circle giving the rider the opportunity of balancing the horse and activating the hindlegs before allowing him the freedom to adjust his stride and elongate his frame and cover more ground without quickening his tempo. Maintaining the tempo is critical in developing his suspension and impulsion so that the stride does not become flat and hurried. The transition back to working canter is progressive allowing the rider approximately 10 meters to rebalance the horse through one



corner before showing a working pace through the next corner. The willingness of the horse to listen to the rider's aids is evident when this transition is shown effortlessly and without tension, maintaining the rhythm and showing the beginnings of adjustability within this pace.



The Collected Canter is required from Elementary through to Grand Prix level with *developing degrees of collection* through each level. The education of the horse now brings into focus the *second and third phases of training - "Development of Pushing Power" and the "Development of Carrying Power"*. The Collected Canter is characterised by a heightened self-carriage where the neck is raised and arched, without restriction through the gullet, with a soft poll. The horse is accepting of the bit and shows a lightness of the forehand,



mobile, supple shoulders and soft, pliable back. The hocks will show articulation and swing well under the centre of gravity developing *impulsion* and engagement of the hindquarters. The strides of a Collected Canter are shorter than other variations of the canter but should not lose activity, elasticity or cadence. The horse moves with greater

lightness, freedom and mobility of the shoulders and *straightness*. The horse presents a picture of proud alertness and harmony.

The Medium Canter also begins at Elementary level but only through to Advanced level with the exception of one movement in the Intermediate II – Medium canter; flying change; medium canter across the diagonal – a test of obedience to



the rider's aids. It is a pace between working and extended canter showing moderately longer strides with greater impulsion and maintaining an uphill balance and self-carriage. The rider must allow the horse the freedom to move with suppleness and athleticism showing cadenced, unconstrained strides. Remaining on the bit, the horse should carry his head slightly in front of the vertical during the Medium Canter; the rider allowing a little more "frame". The horse must remain straight at all times with correct body bend as required on movements such as circles. The adjustability of the horse through the transition to Collected Canter should show fluency, precision and willingness.



The Extended Canter is required from Medium level through to Grand Prix. The horse should cover as much ground as possible with cadenced strides. The utmost of impulsion



should be demonstrated, correctly developed from active, well engaged hindlegs, the energy created then transferred through a supple, swinging back. There should be a very clear difference in the degree of impulsion and ground cover that is shown in medium canter. The Extended Canter can be exhilarating for the rider and also for the judge to see and when performed well, the horse shows a joy in his own ability. To cover the ground without restriction, the horse must be allowed to lengthen his frame and work into a light, elastic connection with the rider's rein aid, maintaining the correct rhythm throughout. The head and neck of the horse may lower and extend slightly with the nose pointing more forward. The strides remain uphill, balanced and straight with clear carrying capacity on the hindquarters, expressive impulsion showing free and mobile shoulders and a comfortable self-carriage. The tempo should not quicken while the strides become more elastic with clear suspension and ground cover. The transition to Collected Canter should be smoothly executed by taking more weight on the hindquarters while maintaining rhythm, balance and cadence. There should always be an impression of willingness and harmony.

Again we take a look at a few problems that may occur within the canter variations and test movements using the Training Scale as our guide for marking:

The most important factor in training the canter and in all paces, is that the purity of the pace is maintained. In the Canter, there can be instances where a horse displays an incorrect beat giving an impression of a 4-beat canter through a lack of engagement known by many as a "tranter". It is an uncomfortable diminishment of the pure 3-beat to watch and cannot be ignored by the judge. A 4-beat canter occurs because rather than the diagonal pair touching the ground simultaneously the forefoot touches the ground before the hindfoot, there is no longer a moment of suspension, and we then observe 4 beats rather than 3. A 2-beat lateral canter is also a serious deterioration of the canter pace and is generally caused by a lack of suppleness through the body.

In the assessment of specific canter movements, it is essential to consider the quality of the canter before, during and after the movement e.g a flying change. It is not just that the horse performs a correct change (or sequence of changes if required) but judges must also take into consideration the quality of the canter before, during and after the change/s. If an impure rhythm is seen in any movement the mark can only be a Sufficient/Marginal to Satisfactory mark (5.0 to 6.0) or lower depending on the severity of the deterioration of the rhythm. For example, a clear 4-beat canter shown throughout an entire movement could never be awarded more than a 4.0. Appropriate comments would be "Establish and maintain correct rhythm to improve balance and fluency" or "Improve engagement to help sustain pure rhythm".

Suppleness of the back is a vital component of the overall picture in the canter. If we see that the horse is "holding" through the back and not allowed the freedom to move in an elastic way, for example, in a collected canter, we must consider this in our marking and a Satisfactory mark of 6.5 at best would be appropriate. The hindquarters cannot swing

through in an athletic way when the back is not up and supple. Wording such as “Develop more suppleness over the back” or “Allow more freedom to improve articulation of joints and self-carriage”.

Acceptance of the bridle is a prerequisite to harmony. Contact issues such as open mouth, leaning on the bit, coming off the bit, twisting the poll are clear avoidances and will be marked accordingly. For instance, if the horse shows resistance to the contact in a transition from Medium to Collected Canter, this must be taken into consideration of the whole movement. No matter how expressive the actual Medium Canter is, if there are contact issues in the transition to collection then a Satisfactory mark of 6.5 is again appropriate or lower if the issue is severe. The horse must stay in balance and show willing adjustability in all transitions. Whilst understanding that the rider would be all too aware of contact issues, we as judges need to tactfully point out these flaws, perhaps commenting “Contact issues disturbing fluency and harmony” or “Open mouth, avoiding true acceptance of the bit” or “Tilting poll affecting suppleness through back and diminishing impulsion”.

The canter can also provide us with opportunities to look in awe at a horse’s athleticism and power. When we see, for instance, an Extended Canter that shows a wonderful uphill balance, self-carriage, clearly engaged with expressive jump, suspension and an attitude of pure joy, we can be very confident of giving high marks of Very Good to Excellent (9.0 to 10.0). Obviously, the balance back to collection before the flying change and its accuracy, will also need to be taken into consideration if the change is not a separate mark. But where there’s brilliance, don’t hold back in your comments “Expressive and inspiring impulsion” or “Bravely ridden out showing harmony and athleticism”.

For full information on the canter and how to judge it, go to the FEI Dressage Handbook – Guidelines for Judging.

We hope these articles on paces have been helpful and as always - enjoy your judging!

Cheers, Sue Scaysbrook

National A Level and Young Horse Judge and Mentor

A special thanks goes to Rodney’s Photography for sponsoring local photos for our Through the Paces series!





# FEI JUDGING SEMINAR CONDUCTED IN AUSTRALIA

*A Report from attendee Jobina Kennedy*

On 16th & 17th October 2025, in association with the Australian Dressage Championships an FEI Dressage Judges Maintenance Course covering Levels 1 - 3 was held at SIEC. This was the first time since 2014 that a course of this type has been conducted in Australia.

To maintain accreditation as an FEI Dressage Judge every year we are required to pass an FEI CES Online Assessment and every three years attend and pass an FEI CES Maintenance Course. These courses are usually held in Europe and while it is very important for FEI judges from the pacific region to pursue educational opportunities in Europe it is quite an expensive undertaking so we were very fortunate to have the opportunity to attend one of these courses in Australia.

Our Course Directors were highly respected FEI 5\* Judges Dr Hans-Christian Matthiesen (DEN) and Mary Seefried (AUS). Six FEI-accredited judges and 10 IDOC members were in attendance from the Pacific region, including from Japan, Taipei, New Zealand and Australia.

The first day was spent in the classroom and to start the morning Hans-Christian presented a very thought-provoking presentation on “Stress and Conflict Behaviour in Dressage Horses”. He

encouraged us to think very deeply about the welfare of the horse in dressage sport and our responsibility as judges, how the sport can move forward in the future and how we can keep our social license to operate. We finished the morning with another very interesting and informative presentation from Hans-Christian on the importance of correct contact and the guidelines for marking.



The afternoon on the first day was then taken up with the important part of the seminar...the CES Video Assessment. For this session Hans-Christian was assisted by Daniel Gohlen of Black Horse One. We were presented with 15 video clips containing 35 different movements & transitions from FEI Junior tests through to Grand Prix. With only one opportunity to observe each clip everyone was required to enter a mark and comment on their device. On completion, all marks and comments were submitted for assessment. A review and discussion was then held with the opportunity to view the video clips again, this proved to be a very valuable learning opportunity for everyone who participated.

On the second day we had the opportunity to observe the CDN Grand Prix and the CDI-W Grand Prix competitions with Mary, who initially provided commentary through the tests and encouraged discussion about the important aspects of each test. Attendees were then given the opportunity to provide their own commentary on the microphone to the rest of the group. On conclusion, we headed back to the classroom to view the GP tests again on video with Hans-Christian who provided some valuable insights as the judge positioned at C for both competitions. Daniel also showed us an exciting new development he has made with the Black Horse system which enables video clips of multiple combinations executing the same movement one after the other to be viewed and assessed. An advancement that will further enhance the quality of judge education.

The Maintenance Course was very successful and greatly enjoyed by all judges in



attendance. We were afforded an excellent opportunity to work so closely with both Hans-Christian and Mary and learn from their extensive knowledge and experience. Alongside Hans-Christian and Mary this course would not have been possible without the hard work of Amy McGregor our very dedicated EA Officials Pathway Manager and the support of IDOC. All who

are committed to ensuring that FEI judges in our region are provided with high quality education with the understanding that this is the path forward for our sport. Everyone who attended was extremely grateful for the opportunity and we hope that another maintenance course will be held in Australia again sometime in the future.

## UPCOMING EVENTS, potential sit-in and shadow opportunities

We are kicking off 2026 with the new rules workshop on 20 January, which will have an extra little bit of spice looking at Warning Cards. Mary Houghton will email the link to register for the workshop very soon and we hope to see you all there.



**20 January 2026**  
**NEW RULES WORKSHOP** *together with*  
**THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY**

WARNING CARDS  
Who can issue them?  
When to issue them?  
Why do it at all?

BEHAVIOUR  
What's good, what's bad and what's just ugly

RIGHTS of riders, volunteers & officials

**With Ann-Maree Lourey, Kristen Closson  
& Jodie Dunstan**

As competitions take a little break over our hottest weeks of the year we have an opportunity to plan for 2026. The NSW Events Calendar is already available and might help you plan an assault on sit-ins and shadows.

[https://www.dressagensw.equestrian.org.au/sites/default/files/2026\\_DNSW\\_Calendar\\_20251121.pdf](https://www.dressagensw.equestrian.org.au/sites/default/files/2026_DNSW_Calendar_20251121.pdf)

If you are planning to upgrade in 2026 make sure you check the rule book to ensure you have all your prerequisites covered - have you judged enough official tests at your current level? If you have gaps, make a plan now!

We are a small community and all need one another to make every event a success for organisers, riders and ourselves! If you are upgrading, we are all sharing that journey with you, hoping for a great group of horses for you to judge and that the words for great comments and marks come to you at just the right moment! It can seem like a lonely journey but please, reach out to the JSC if you are stuck and just need a bit of a pep talk or some advice.

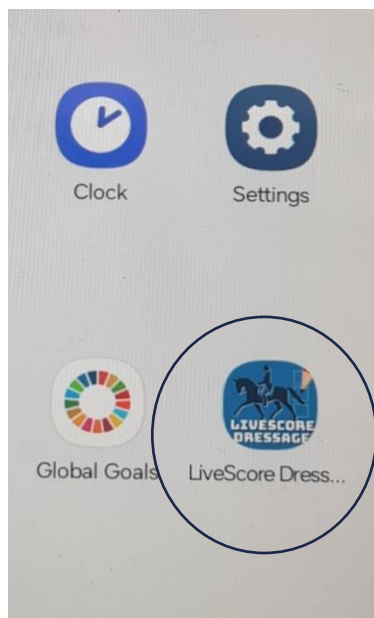


## I.T. CORNER – TIPS AND TRICKS

I hope everyone is now able to find their class results when they're judging at C and using the Nominate e-scoring system. Now that you can find the results, if you're the C judge using Nominate, don't forget to **sign off** the results for the event.

When you look at the class from the podium page, please remember the judges at another other markers (H M E B) cannot see the podium on their screen.

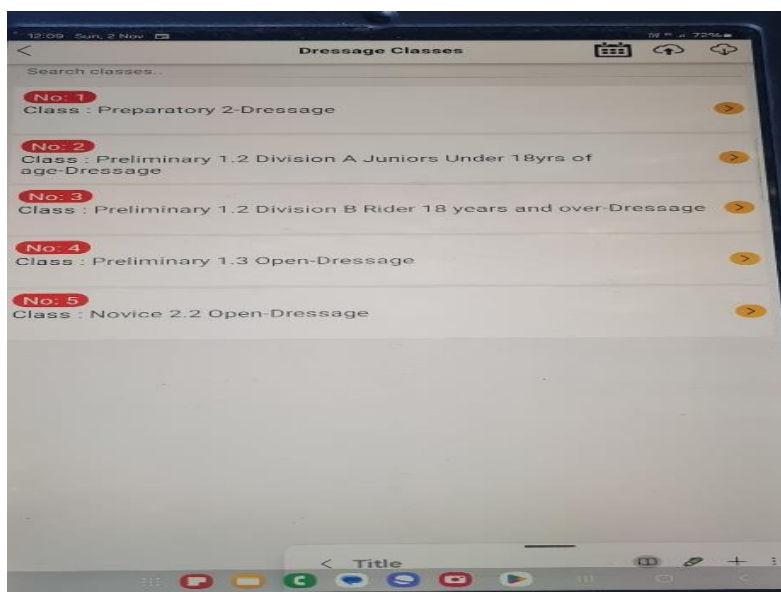
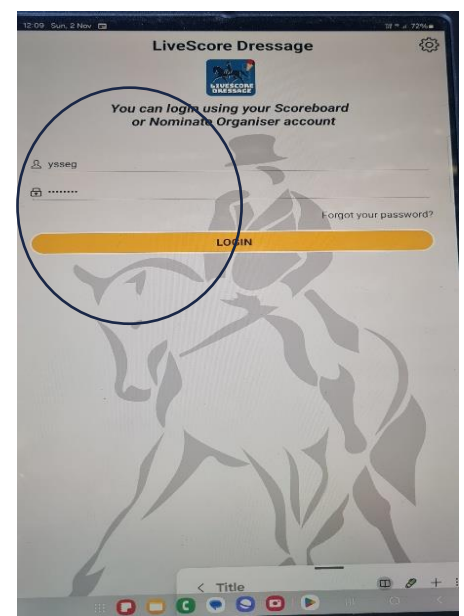
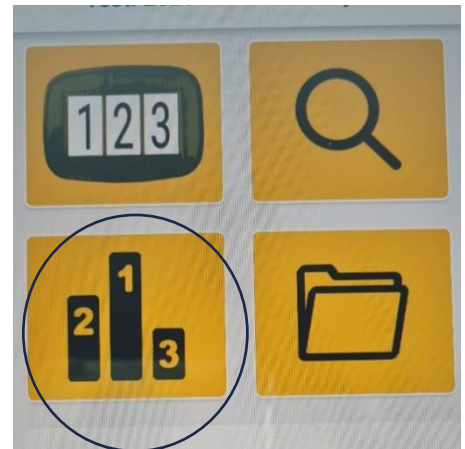
### PROBLEM – ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF SCORING SYSTEM



If your scribe has struck a problem and backed all the way out of the system, breathe, it's all okay. If you're at the home page of the tablet (with a variety of often irrelevant apps), just click on the Nominate [LiveScore](#) app (pic below). Because different tablets will have different apps installed, the app might be in a different place on the page, but it has the same symbol.

The Password page will appear next, the password should have already been entered by the OC but if not call them (some OCs will give it to you in your folder).

Once you're through that, find your class and your competitor via the magnifying glass on the page pictured above) and you're off and running again.



## SCORING ON BLACKHORSE AND TABLET DOESN'T RECOGNISE THE KEYBOARD

If your BlackHorse scoring platform is jammed, it won't take any input from the keyboard. Press the escape key (ESC) about 3 times (firmly) and then type something on the keyboard. That should allow the keyboard to reconnect to the tablet. The writer might need to back space (delete) what they just keyed in before the keyboard disconnected, but they'll be back. This can happen after you've taken a lunchbreak and come back to resume the class.

## What's happening on ENGAGE

Don't forget Engage offers courses to support your ongoing judge education and upgrading. A great place to start your 2026 upgrade plan. New material is planned for 2026, we're just waiting for the dust to settle on the EA front and we'll get to work.

You can find courses on engage via the Catalogue:

<https://officialstraining.ensw.org.au/catalogue>

Don't forget the "**Judging Directives**" courses feature video examples for each movement using the Scale of Marks and referencing The Training Scale, showing you exactly what to look for when assessing performance.

if you've never logged into Engage before, you'll need a New User activation email. Contact [admin@dressagensw.com.au](mailto:admin@dressagensw.com.au) and Mary will assist you. If you have logged in before but need to reset your password you can do this from the login page.

Here is the login page for Engage LMS:

<https://officialstraining.ensw.org.au>

## FEI JUDGES HANDBOOK

You can now order the FEI Judges handbook online via the new EA Portal. Once you are logged on, go to SHOP, then FEI Official items and it should be there. It's now \$102.

## Handy hints for last minute Christmas presents for Judges

Just in case the family's struggling for last minute gift ideas, here's a few we ideas we threw together:

1. Sunblock or fake tan to help even up the tan lines between the left and right arms.
2. A hat with built-in fans - anything to help that hot summer air move!
3. A baby shade screen for us and our pencils: not just for babies!
4. A fuel card: you know, so that we can run our air-conditioning when it is 35 degrees outside and we can't stand being hot for one more minute!
5. A box of protein bars: something to supplement lunch offerings! Protein bars are our saviours!
6. A decent but light raincoat for when we get out in the rain and tramp the arena when we arrive, and later get out to remind riders where to go when they make errors
7. A pair of absolutely indestructible boots: we need boots in winter that cannot be ruined, and shoes in summer that breathe but cannot be crushed by an errant horse.



We hope Santa is kind to you all, possibly with gifts that have nothing to do with horses or judging. Have a wonderful break and we look forward to seeing you at the 2026 workshops and seminars!