

Riding

Expert advice and easy-to-follow exercises to help you improve your technique in the saddle

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Expert advice to help you become a more effective rider

Wiola Grabowska



is a rider who trains the mind and body of horse and rider

Carol Mailer



is a top show jumper and trainer who helps riders of all levels

Charles Wilson



is one of the leading natural horsemanship experts in the UK

Sarah Weston



is a trainer and founder of Logical Horsemanship

Claire Lilley



is an international dressage rider who trains riders of all levels

PRIVATE LESSON

with international dressage rider **Andrew Gould**

Encouraging your horse to work over his back properly and through from behind can be a challenge but it's worth the effort to achieve a lighter and more responsive horse

Andrew Gould has been successfully competing in dressage since he was 13. As a young rider he had international success on his horse Koffee Break, who he trained himself from a five-year-old. He was on five consecutive GB

European Teams, won a team bronze medal in 2000 and went on to compete at International Grand Prix level with Koffee Break. Andrew is now one of the UK's leading dressage riders - he's renowned and respected on the circuit by some of the most well-known figures in the sport.

As well as this, he's also in huge demand as a trainer. With numerous titles under his belt, Andrew's sights are now set firmly on World and

Fact file

Name: Andrew Gould
Experience: Winner of 11 regional championship classes to date, winner of 2011 Compiègne, France CDI 3* KUR, Winner of Premier League classes up to Inter I level and British Dressage Central Region and Southern Regional Trainer

Olympic selection in 2012. Andrew runs Priory Dressage with his wife Polly. It offers a full range of services for every dressage enthusiast, providing full training livery for competition horses and riders with superb facilities at their yard in Surrey. Andrew is also available for dressage lessons and clinics right the way from Novice level to the dizzy heights of Grand Prix.

Today, Andrew is helping Your Horse reader Justine Robinson and her horse Enzo break into the dressage world. So far Justine and Enzo's main discipline has been show jumping but Justine is keen to get her seven-year-old Warmblood into the dressage game as well. With a competition on the horizon Justine's lesson with Andrew could not have come at a better time.

A change of discipline can be challenging so Andrew needs to help Justine put the basics in place. He watches her with a critical eye as she warms up with Enzo and soon sees the area in need of work.



Meet the pupil
Find out over the page how Andrew helps Enzo to work onto a contact

A change of discipline can be challenging

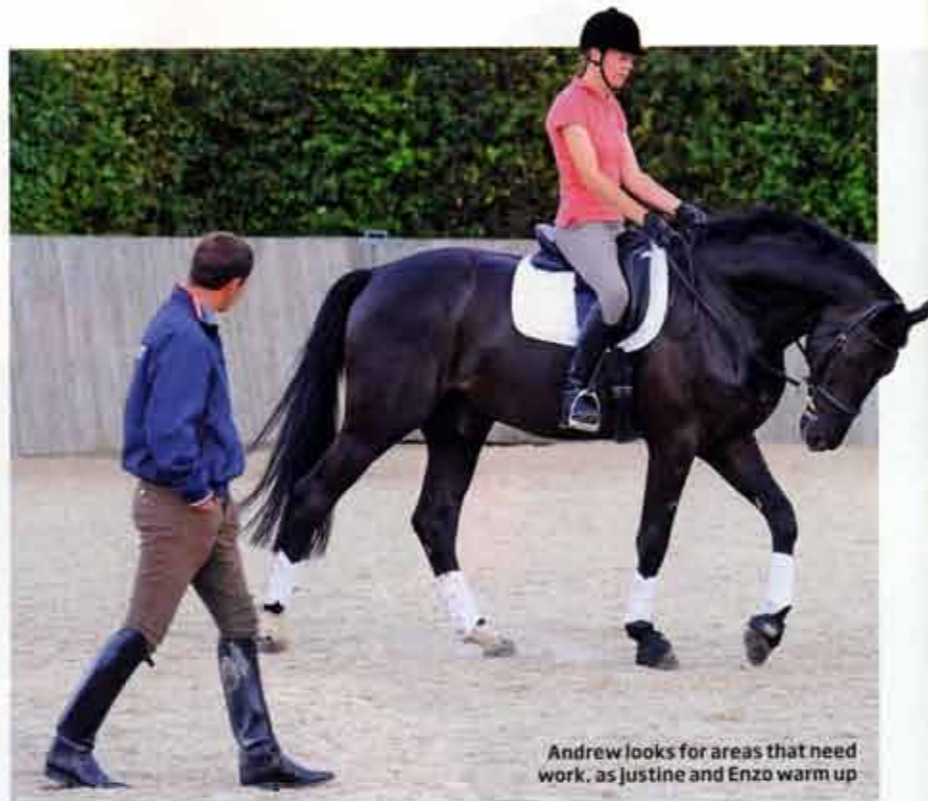
See the celebs
YOUR HORSELIVE
Top riders will be giving tips and advice at our fantastic show on 12-13 November. Visit www.yourhouselive.co.uk for more details.

This month's pupil Justine Robinson



Justine bought her seven-year-old, 17.2hh Belgian Warmblood, Enzo just four months ago. Their main discipline is show jumping

but Justine is keen for them to try their hand at dressage and with a competition coming up three days after their lesson with Andrew, Justine is feeling positive. They're currently at unaffiliated level and planning to tackle a Novice test next. "He's such a lovely horse and he's built for dressage so I thought, why not give it a go," says Justine. "We love our show jumping but I'm ready for a new challenge."



Andrew looks for areas that need work, as Justine and Enzo warm up

THE PROBLEM AREA

Andrew calls Justine into the centre of the school and asks her what she thinks.

Justine believes the problem lies in Enzo's back. "He's not relaxing through his back which is affecting his way of going," says Justine. "He's worse on the left rein."

Andrew explains the issue is in fact with the contact, not Enzo's back. "The problem you have is with getting Enzo working forwards into your contact," he explains. "This is a very common problem and it's just a case of trying to

build his confidence in going forwards and accepting your contact, instead of evading it or simply sitting behind it.

"The jump work you do with him might have an effect on the way he goes forwards into a contact - I imagine he's physically used to sitting behind it. I wouldn't say Enzo has any issues with his back. It's an area that needs work but it's certainly not a problem area and he's still fairly young, so this can be easily worked on."

Andrew says that Enzo has some good paces and real scope but to get the best

from him Justine needs to get him working into a consistent contact.

In order to get Enzo warmed up further and in an attempt to get him working on a contact, Andrew asks Justine to try a few walk to trot transitions with him. "Make sure you're not pulling back on the bit, you simply want to add a little more pressure on his mouth but don't pull back," says Andrew.

Andrew tells Justine to start by establishing a forward going trot. "Keep him straight in the neck," he says. "Don't worry too



Andrew says

As you usually show jump in a Pelham bit, I suspect that Enzo tends to sit behind this and not in a true outline. There's not as much need for an outline in show jumping but in dressage and in a snaffle bit he really needs to be accepting a consistent contact and working in a true outline, which will in turn get him working better from behind. A lot of riders tend to fret about what bit to use and these days there are so many bits out there that people end up getting confused. From personal experience, I would say the best bit is just the basic stainless steel snaffle. The new plastic ones like Enzo's sometimes don't give the horse enough to hold on to. Also, consider using a fixed cheekpiece in order to prevent the bit from slipping or allowing your horse to move it to one side as Enzo keeps doing.



Andrew thinks Enzo will do better with a fixed cheekpiece



Enzo needs to work more forwards



Andrew says

It's important to remember you need your horse to be going forwards to be able to collect him. It might feel like he's running away with you but it's the best way to achieve the contact you're seeking.

much about the bend at this stage, just let him find the rhythm first." Enzo keeps pulling his head up and evading the contact, completely cutting Justine out of the picture, particularly around the corners. "He's falling out in the corners and he's blocking you out," explains Andrew. "Make sure you've got him in both reins."

Justine has to make sure she's consistent and even with both hands. Andrew asks her for a downward transition to walk and suggests that rather than pulling back on Enzo's

mouth, she should use her seat and her legs to slow Enzo down. As soon as Enzo hits walk Justine asks for trot again. These quick transitions really get Enzo thinking and listening to Justine and will help him to work into a contact.

CHECKING THE CANTER WORK

"Now, let's have a look at the canter," says Andrew. Starting off on the left rein (Enzo's worst rein) the pace lacks impulsion so Justine works on getting Enzo into more of a working canter.



Enzo is constantly trying to evade the contact in canter

Enzo is constantly trying to evade the contact and as a result is pulling Justine forwards in her seat. "Keep your body straight, don't let him pull you forwards - you need to stop collapsing in the middle," says Andrew. "He's just being gobby because he wants you to let go of the contact but you only give when he gives to you and starts to work with it. "He needs to be able to hold himself, not rely on you to hold him."

Once again, on Justine's downward transition from canter to trot, Andrew advises her to sit deep into her saddle and push down into her feet to help slow Enzo, as opposed to pulling on his mouth. "I can really feel the difference when using my legs and seat more," says Justine.

Andrew asks Justine to canter Enzo on the right rein this time.



Andrew says

Working in an outline isn't just about your horse having his head down, it's about working correctly from behind and using the muscles over his back properly as well as moving forwards with energy. His hindlegs should be stepping forwards underneath his body and the energy should be contained through your seat and hands. Having your horse working on a contact is crucial and really helps you to have more control over him and enable him to be more balanced and responsive.



Left to his own devices, Enzo prefers a higher head carriage

GET THE DETAILS RIGHT

Andrew says Justine doesn't have a strong enough contact on her outside rein which is causing Enzo to fall out through his shoulder and lose his balance. Justine needs to make sure the contact is even on both reins to stop this happening and help Enzo to balance.

This is Enzo's better rein and the canter is much stronger and more forward. "Forget about his head for the moment," says Andrew. "If he feels like he's running away with you, use your seat and legs, rather than your hands."

Andrew tells Justine to move her hands slightly and play with the reins to help. "Come down to trot, but keep him going forwards," says Andrew. "He's got a nice trot but it's very basic and there's a lot more to be done with it."

Andrew tells Justine to come back to walk and have a quick rest before tackling the next stage. After their quick walk round, Andrew asks Justine to pick up her reins in preparation. He notices that, as soon as she does this, Enzo instantly runs away from the contact. He reminds Justine to sit deep and use her legs, rather than pull back on his mouth, even if this is instinctively what she wants to do.

Enzo keeps falling out, particularly in

the corners so Andrew suggests using walk to halt transitions until he's listening and also suggests that Justine needs to have a stronger contact with her outside rein.

ORGANISING THE OUTLINE

Next, Andrew concentrates on Enzo's outline. "His shape is too low for a test but he hasn't got the balance or strength to hold a perfect test shape just yet."

To get Enzo working in a perfect outline will take time and effort and cannot be achieved in just one lesson but Andrew explains how to work on this. Justine needs to ride Enzo into a downward contact first before then tackling the process of bringing his head back up. At present, Enzo is using an upward position to evade the contact so the key is to work him down first and get him on the contact, before bringing his head up and perfecting and maintaining the outline.

After a few circuits of trot, Enzo is finally following the contact. "People often think it's their horse's back when actually the problem lies in the contact," says Andrew. "The contact works like protection, you're asking him to follow your lead and become supple in the jaw."

UPDATE
After her lesson, Justine competed in Prelim 19 at the Oldencraig Unaffiliated Dressage Championships and came 7th with a score of 64.54 - she is sure her lesson helped!

"Move your hands slightly on the reins and play with the contact in order to make it more smooth and even."

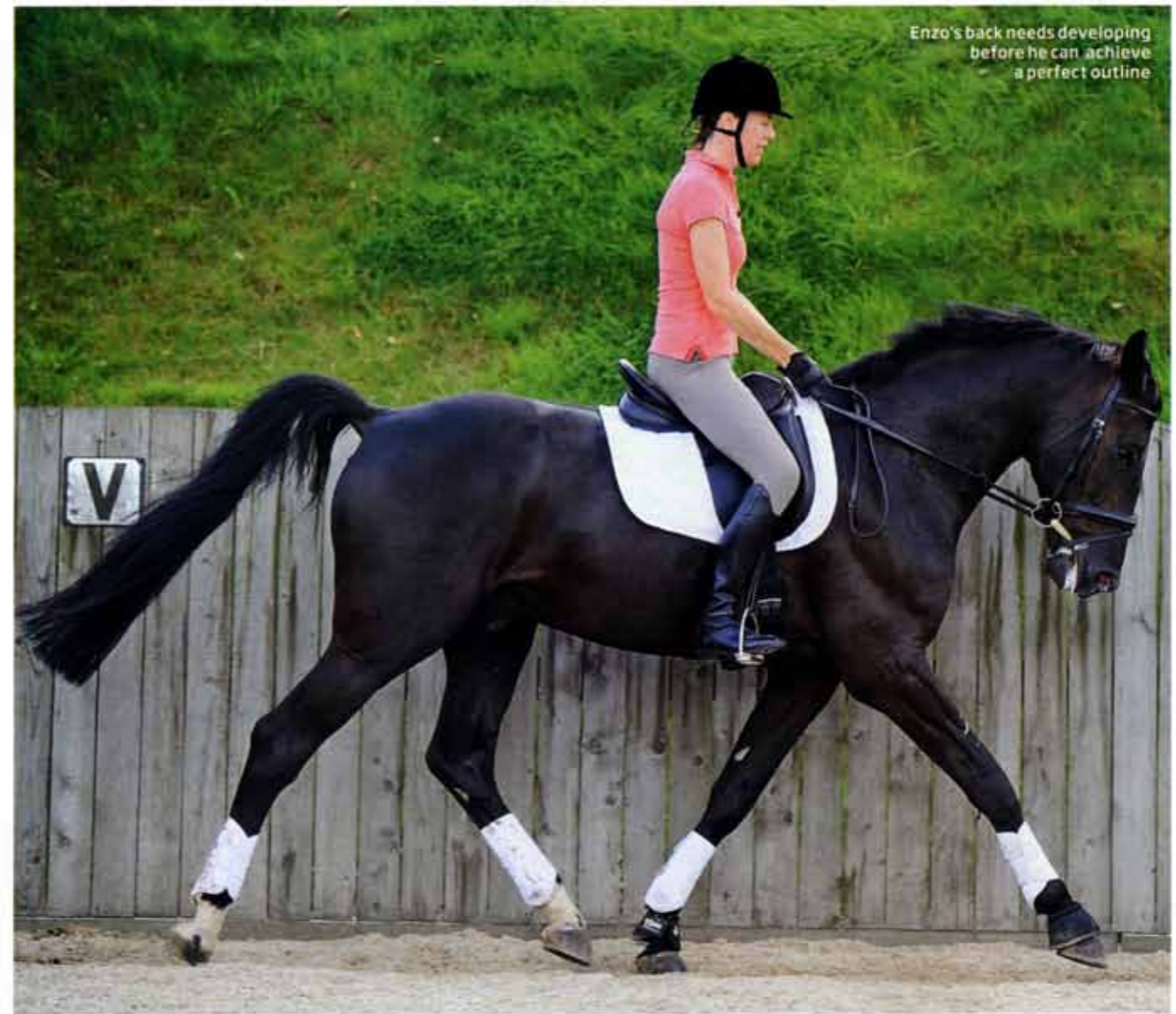
Towards the end of the lesson, Andrew tackles Enzo's medium trot. "You need to have a slightly shorter rein here, sit up and don't tip forwards," says Andrew. "Use the corners to get the outline right and get him even in both reins, don't let him drop behind the contact - keep him working through." Justine drives Enzo forward on the long sides and he extends nicely.

"He's got a nice stride but you need to work on his balance. He has real potential but it's going to take time." Andrew explains that Justine needs to keep her hands quite wide and move the bit ever so slightly from left to right to keep Enzo working evenly on the contact. Justine also needs to get him working lower and stronger in the trot.

Andrew concludes by having a quick look at Enzo's free walk. "You need to allow the walk to have a little more freedom," says Andrew. "Let him take a bit more rein and really try to drive him forwards."

"He needs more impulsion and overtrack in the walk." After a few strides Enzo has more impulsion but this is an area that will also need work over the coming weeks.

Riding Private lesson



Enzo's back needs developing before he can achieve a perfect outline

The key is to stay focused and ride him through the blockages

THE VERDICT

I could see a definite improvement in the canter by the end, there wasn't as much resistance or evasion as there had been at the beginning. Enzo has real potential but he's only young and Justine needs to work on a few more things before he makes it to the level she would like him to be. Enzo's back is an area that needs developing but it's definitely not the problem area Justine may have thought. When the lesson first began he was quite short in his strides, not in a sense that there's anything wrong, simply in a 'I can't be bothered to lengthen and walk through' sort of way. The key here is to stay focused and ride

him through the blockages, make sure he's on an even and consistent contact so that you can teach him to sit with his back end, not shorten. Remember, you need to get him working forwards in order to be able to collect him, there's no reason why he can't be ridden deep as he does naturally want to stay on the contact once he's on it. In terms of Justine's test - her and Enzo's marks may fluctuate to start with as some areas are better than others but he's still quite young and with a bit of work he'll get there. The level doesn't matter at this stage, it's all about practise and gaining experience."

What Justine learnt

- ✓ The problem lies in the contact, not Enzo's back
- ✓ It's vital to get Enzo working forwards in order to get him on a contact
- ✓ Enzo needs to be stronger before he'll achieve the perfect outline
- ✓ She needs to use her legs and seat more than her hands when slowing down
- ✓ Consider investing in a new bit