

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY HORSE IS A *Fino* Horse

By Carlos Tobon

A Classic Fino Horse - how nice would that be? A Classic Fino horse must meet the standards of the breed and the PFHA show rules found in Chapter III, Section III – Classic Fino Division as it states.....

“An evenly spaced, four-beat lateral gait. This gait is smooth, animated, exciting and executed with brilliance and style. The horse must be fully collected and balanced, putting its complete dynamic energy into its carriage and the quickness of its footfall. Flexion and extension should be harmonious in all four legs, and the horse must present a picture of symmetry and fluidness of motion. The horse must perform this highly collected form of the gait naturally and willingly, and any indication that the horse is being excessively restrained or held in gait shall be penalized. The horse’s forward speed is extremely slow, whereas the footfall is exceedingly rapid.”

Producing a Classic Fino horse is the hardest task for breeders and requires a lot of time and dedication from trainers. The best way to determine whether a horse is a Fino is by examining the horse at all ages.

Most Paso Fino horses demonstrate the Paso Fino gait from birth; however, some foals show it more than others during their developmental years. Particular bloodlines within the breed have characteristics that allow breeders and connoisseurs to make an assessment about the natural ability of foals within that line. I do not believe that you can tell whether a foal will develop into a Classic Fino horse with 100% certainty while it is a foal. What can be evaluated is the athleticism, mechanics, natural collection, or quickness of footfall and the “brio” or spirit of the horse. Time and experience in studying and evaluating foals have trained me to watch for these particular traits.

When you are working with a foal in hand and are asking the foal to move, note whether the foal responds with energy that creates a quicker footfall rather than extending its stride or showing a desire to move away from you. If the foal is able to maintain that energy and quick footfall action, you can estimate the foal has the natural ability to perform the Classic Fino movement. For a foal free at large, encourage the foal to move forward and watch its initial reaction for the first 10 steps. After 10 strides or so, most foals will lose the energy to maintain collection, so any assessment after that may be inaccurate.



Above: William Arboleda with El Secreto de Besilu - 21 month old colt lunging

A lot of times, a foal will be lunged or led on the concrete forcing it to focus on where it steps rather than being playful. This technique allows you to see its mechanics better. However, it is also very important to evaluate the horse in a straight line as well as while lunging. Evaluating a foal on the circle only over concrete enhances the foal’s appearance of athleticism because it will have to increase its footfall speed in order to stay balanced. This can result in a false reading. Handlers need to teach the foal to lunge properly on soft ground before testing the foal over concrete.



Above: William Arboleda with El Secreto de Besilu - 21 month old colt being lead in straight line.

From a business perspective, you will find that most knowledgeable breeders, owners, and trainers are willing to wait and take their chances on a young foal that exhibits these characteristics, even if that foal does not ultimately turn out to be Classic Fino. Breeders will often speculate on the horse’s future themselves, but

if the horse is sold for a high price, then the new owner takes on the risk that the horse may or may not become Fino.



Above: David Castro on TE Astracan de Vuelta Grande 2011 Reserve Grand National Champion Classic Fino Stallion

What is the main purpose of a Classic Fino horse? **SHOWING**

It takes a very rigorous training program to bring a Classic Fino horse to form. As long as you plan to compete, it is best that the horse remains in some sort of training and conditioning program. You can have a horse with the ability to be Classic Fino but fail to bring out its talent by neglecting the proper training. The horse will, by nature, have good quality of gait, tighter mechanics, and more quickness than other horses, but if the horse does not have the proper training regimen, it will not succeed at the Classic Fino. Would Michael Jordan have become an accomplished athlete if he had not practiced and competed rigorously? Despite his extraordinary talent, it is doubtful he would have had the same success just by playing basketball with friends on weekends. The Classic Fino horse is no different.

As the horse ages and we move into the saddle training, it is important to discuss the other aspects involved in the successful development of your Classic Fino horse.

- Temperament and brio
- Training routine
- Ability of trainer
- Financial commitment

Temperament and Brio

When saddle training begins, a trainer learns more about the overall temperament and behavior of the horse. The ability of a trainer to get to know the individual quirks of each horse is essential. A Classic Fino horse works so hard when it is asked to perform or “collect” that management of its mental state must begin at a young age and is the key to the long term future of that horse. A trainer will have to adjust the training routine from his/her regular style if the horse has some issues of temperament, brio, or even if the horse is talented but lazy.

Brio is the inner spirit of the horse and shows in its responsiveness to stimulation. There are many levels of brio and each horse is different. An ideal brio for a Classic Fino horse is seen when the horse does not require constant stimulation from its rider to keep going. However, that brio should not be so intense that the horse cannot handle outside stimulation (i.e., noise, things moving, or other distractions that result in making the horse unmanageable). The level of brio in a horse will determine the routine a trainer will take in order to bring the horse to its peak. A horse with ideal brio is a forward horse with energy at all times. Brio is not something that can be taught - the horse either has it or not. Once a horse is supple and in condition, some horses do learn to perform the Classic Fino gait for longer periods of time.

Training a Classic Fino horse begins with developing the basic foundation of riding. Suppleness and flexibility as well as responsiveness to the rein must be kept at paramount during the entire process of training. This will allow the horse to develop the proper muscular strength and eventually the cardiovascular condition to maintain its collection in balance and be able to perform the gait with ease. The building of consistency and a routine of structure for a Fino horse is the same as building a progressive educational structure for a child from kindergarten through high school.



Above: Carlos Tobon riding Profeta Segundo de Besilu exhibiting a flexing and walking in a circle



Carlos Tobon riding Profeta Segundo de Besilu exhibiting (top) - flat walk, (middle) - gaiting in relaxed frame, (bottom) - fully collected at the Classic Fino

will be essential for you as an owner.

A horse that learns to be responsive and stay calm at the same time will have the necessary comfort to collect and perform the Classic Fino gait in a willing manner. This will also lengthen the competitive life of your Classic Fino horse in the show ring. Keeping in mind that the ultimate goal is to SHOW this horse; the trainer and owner will have to determine when the horse is prepared to handle its first show. It is very common for a trainer to take a young Classic Fino prospect to several shows before the horse is even entered into a class. This will help the horse to become familiar with aspects of the show environment without the added stress of competition. Owners must understand that if you have a Classic Fino horse, or any show horse that has all of the ideal qualities, their first experience in the show ring should be as positive an experience as possible. While you may be able to see the ability of your horse to be Classic Fino after a few months in training, you must be patient to develop their mental maturity as well as their physical condition. Remember that the horse will not mature mentally until seven years of age or more. Different Classic Fino horses reach their peak talent at different ages - there is no set time frame, and different bloodlines are known for maturing at different times. Horses, like humans, are individuals both physically and mentally, and they are impacted by their learning environment as well.

Once a Classic Fino horse has finished its training, it will need regular riding and conditioning to maintain its ability to be ridden at the same level of collection for a long period of time.

Trainer's Ability

The Paso Fino breed has a large number of good trainers. Any trainer who is able to train a horse to be relaxed while working and responsive to the reins will be able to train a Classic Fino horse. The difference will come in the fine tuning and the trainer's ability to handle horses with different levels of brio to maximize a particular horse's talent. Training a Classic Fino horse is an art, as is training top show horses. There is chemistry between the horse and the rider. Although there are situations when a change of hands is necessary, it is best to keep the training system and handling consistent to correctly evaluate your horse's true potential. If you have a good relationship with your trainer and he/she wants to benefit the horse, it may be wise to go to a fellow trainer with more experience or another style of training to see if there is more talent to be brought out or if a change of system may be the answer.

Some of the most famous show horses in our breed have had the same rider throughout most of their careers, and they are remembered because of that symbiotic relationship between horse and rider.

Some examples are:
 Alvaro Iriarte and Ensueno de Colombia
 Rick Meyer and Semilla de Corazon Bravo
 Alberto Sierra and Profetiza
 Alberto Sierra and Profeta de Besilu

Fabio Trujillo and El Classico de Plebeyo
 David Castro and Simbolo de Besilu
 Raven Briggs and Rapido del Paso
 Jaime Suarez and JLM's Jaranero
 Jorge Suarez and Pedregal del Conde

There are some Classic Fino horses that, regardless of what trainer rides them, are able to maintain an equal quality of performance with very minor changes. While some horses tolerate a change of rider without diminished performance, others may have a negative outcome under the same circumstances! This occurs more frequently in the Classic Fino than in the other divisions.

Financial Commitment

A major part of owning a Classic Fino horse is financial investment. The basic training needs to be established regardless of how you wish to use the horse. Once you know the horse is a Classic Fino, you must ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it an Amateur Owner type horse? (This depends on your ability as a rider and/or the level of brio in the horse.)
- How often do I want to show him/her?
- Are there enough shows in my area to justify the training I have to put into him/her?
- Is there a suitable trainer in the area?
- If it is a top quality Classic Fino horse, do I want to consider entering the Nationals or International Shows?

If your horse is a Classic Fino, my best advice is to spend the time and money to give it a good solid foundation with six to eight months of training. If you cannot continue its training for financial reasons, you could then personally enjoy the horse if you have the ability to ride it often under relaxed circumstances, until such time as you may want to invest the money to further its potential.

God bless, and I hope your Paso Fino is a Classic Fino Horse.



Carlos Tobon is a third generation Paso Fino breeder. He trained Paso Fino show and recreational horses for 16 years with National Championships in performance, pleasure, fino and Bella forma as well as youth Horsemanship and Equitation. Carlos Tobon focused his career on educating Paso Fino owners, giving clinics for A/O and youth riders throughout the US, Canada and Europe. Carlos Tobon is a SC PFHA judge as well as a Confepaso certified judge, has served as President of Southwestern PFHA, Education Committee Chair for PFHA, a member of the PFHA Judges and Steward's Committee and is a published author. Special thanks to Margaret Vulgaris.

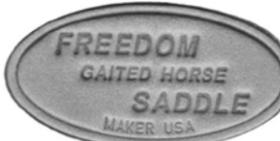


**FREEDOM
GAITED HORSE
SADDLE
MAKER USA**

CASA DOSA PASO FINO TACK

America's MOST TRUSTED Paso Fino Tack Source

Doug & Sandi Ford
 1858 W Oak Grove Road
 Cleveland, OK 74020

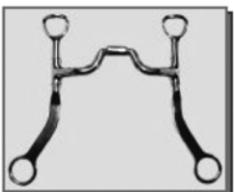


**FREEDOM
GAITED HORSE
SADDLE
MAKER USA**

ALL Major Credit



Paso Trainers



Myler Bits

FreedomSaddle.com



**THE Saddle for Paso Fino horses
and their riders**

Orders Shipped UPS



Bits
Curbs
Reins
Bridles
Girths
Stirrups
Bit hangers
Nose Bands
Bella Forma
Saddle Pads
Training Video
Halters to fit
Paso's

Ride a Better Gaited Horse
With Larry Whitesell

Online Catalog:
www.CasaDosa.com
info@casadosa.com
info@freedomssaddle.com
 918-243-7277
 888-454-3672

Training Routine

Horses need a continuous and steady training program. Most trainers work with Classic Fino horses five or even six days a week. Consistency in the amount of days as well as the consistency of the exercises taught to enhance suppleness and flexibility in the horse is the entire key to the future of the horse. A Classic Fino horse CANNOT perform at a Classic Fino level in the beginning of its training. Trainers will work on the foundational commands and flexibility by first training with the horse relaxed. Collection requires energy and stimulation. This aspect can be a separate article of its own, so understanding your trainer's particular system