

THE PASO FINO SPORT HORSE PART I

By Millie Hopkins, Professional Paso Fino Trainer



conformation, temperament and physical ability to successfully compete and skillfully perform a variety of complex objectives. By definition, a sport horse is not a breed, but a type of horse. Sport Horses include purebreds and cross-breeds, including but not limited to Warm Bloods, Thoroughbreds, and Irish bred crosses, including the Draft Horse, right along with the shorter-legged breeds including Baroque breeds, Quarter Horses, Morgans, Arabs, Ponies, and the American Paso Fino. Traditionally, Sport Horses are used for dressage, eventing, combined driving, and show jumping, but the Paso Fino Sport Horse extends this definition to a whole new market of extreme riders.

They are used and enjoyed in many combinations of challenges from working cowboys who want to keep working but need a smoother ride to Dressage Riders and/or Eventers who want something different but still want to employ some of the facets of their old market on a different kind of horse. The market extends further to Hunter Jumper folks who are exploring new markets for fun and Endurance and Competitive Trail Riders who want the hours in the saddle but can't take the trot any longer! Still further there are the adventure riders who spend untold hours riding the line and riding it hard! ALL love the agility, heart, and stamina of our smoothly gaited Paso Fino! From young men and women who want something different to retirees who are die-hard horsemen

and want to enjoy their kind of training – the Paso Fino Sport Horse is the perfect horse to fill this need.

Without exception, when my horses pop out in this market, folks STOP, LOOK, and want to know MORE! That is very rewarding, for the breed! On my own and with a semi-retired approach since 2003, I have worked with over 30 horses and numerous clients, building toward the Sport Horse market.

A Paso Fino Sport Horse should reflect the Sport Horse definition and meet the National and International Standards and requirements. Interestingly, this standard just reflects and embodies the Life, History, and the Legacy of the Paso Fino.

Conformation: Sport horses should have a sloping shoulder, “turned-over” neck, and an uphill build. Conformation has direct effects on the animal’s movement and jumping ability.

Movement: Although movement may vary between disciplines, most sport horses are bred for a long, athletic stride and movement that uses the whole body. The Paso Fino Corto, Largo, and Canter should have good suspension with the horse naturally reaching under his body with his hind legs. This movement makes it easier for the rider to teach the horse to engage, collect, and extend his stride, which are necessary qualities in all sport horse disciplines.

Jumping Ability: Horses bred for jumping disciplines also possess good jumping form, with tight lower legs and good roundness in the top line during the jump execution.

Temperament: Because a great deal of training is needed to produce a successful Sport Horse, they are generally bred for trainability and willingness to work. Horses intended for Sport Horse Performances are bred a bit “hotter,” which can be controlled by experienced riders and used to his or her advantage, while those intended for amateur use are generally bred to be quieter and more forgiving.

Note: While I am clearly identifying that many Paso Fino horses easily qualify as a true Sport Horse by definition, I do not limit the Paso Fino Sport Horse market to the National and International Sport Horse Definition. Our American Paso Fino’s diversity reaches beyond these perimeters.

Sport Horse Riding

Sport Horse riding is an accelerated form of diverse equine/rider pursuits that require strong rider/handler leadership skills and wise management to build and maintain for partnering hearts, athletic minds/bodies, and team objectives. Sport Horses can be developed by one trainer or multiple trainers who complement each other and the plan to build the horse.

Experienced equine enthusiasts are demanding a well-trained, comfortable riding “athlete” that is experienced and matured! He must be hot, gaited, and a vested partner who is capable to perform diversely and soundly for years and years!

Training the Sport Horse Candidate

While many Paso Fino horses are excellent Sport Horse candidates, not all meet the qualifications. A candidate may meet the conformation package but not the temperament package. Once you have the whole package in hand, it takes about two years to build the right relationship and performing athlete.

The saddle training package includes combined detailed teaching and training that prepares a horse fundamentally for diverse performances and activities with a capable mind and body. From that point, he can be ridden extensively for many equine pursuits safely and soundly, and he is also adequately prepared to be refined for any variety of additional saddle horse pursuits. The options are limitless.

An intense, hot horse with a temperament to conquer diversity is very intelligent and makes a most invested team companion and partner. My horse’s confidence, trust, and respect (in me as his leader) is the axis of my life with him. I will not betray him intentionally. It is my belief with the full investment of a relationship between this animal and his trainer/handler/rider we have “the exceptional” to offer or contribute to any market.

I’m particularly interested in the affects of my applications and goals toward a horse’s emotional and physical development. In short, you can’t train and teach if you don’t have his mind and can’t mature it. And, here is the rub! We must be more intelligent than our student to teach and maintain him! That includes wisely packing into his training program as much as we can without losing the student’s mental clarity and trust. If we don’t have a plan that includes keeping a close watch on how his brain is working with the pressures of his training, we will have problems.

As you can see, partnering is of primary importance with teaching and training. Applied correctly, it provides the MOST of the BEST the horse and handler can offer – each other.

After I have begun the process of riding, at intervals I divert from arena and round pen training and go to new environments that I know will challenge him just enough for him to have success in learning more about that particular maneuver or I will use facets of that environment to help build his musculature so that he can successfully perform particular maneuvers. This encourages his interest in partnering with me as his leader from the saddle, builds upon what I have been teaching or training in the arena or round pen, encourages the acceptance of new environments, teaches more easily a sensitivity and understanding to my distinct cues and demands in the midst of other outside stimuli, and it further establishes me as a trustworthy and dependable leader, because I am the one introducing him to the “new and different” as he successfully accomplishes the things set before him. With me as his leader, we are cultivating fearlessness in the horse that is not normal for his instinct.

Training Components

Let’s note from the top that every horse will come to a trainer with a different level of education. We all adjust our training plans to bring fullness. (While the order presented herein does not necessarily reflect the order I apply the teachings, be aware that each educational portion interchanges with itself and builds upon itself at every level of training.)

The right conformation and temperament are essential.

Throughout the training process, be sure to manage and encourage the right kind of relationship between you and the student. We want to engage him and build his own confidence to partner and apply directives appropriately.

Preschool and Kindergarten Objectives

The horse is a herding animal and fundamentally responds with instincts that revolve entirely around herding characteristics. This instinct includes a partnering with each individual within the herd. This team lives with a distinct order of authority. This order gives protection and provides sustenance. For me, the sooner I establish my position within this order and prove that I can be trusted in leadership, then the ability for me to teach and train is most effective. We become a team of trust and respect. The result is not only a well-trained and tuned athlete, but most importantly, I have developed an engaging a life-long partnership.

Round Pen

I regularly use the round pen as my first step for ALL of my training. It doesn’t matter how old the student or whether he has been trained or not. In the round pen, I discover “who” my newest student is in the herd ranking order with me along with his personality and physical maturity and development.



Mental and Physical Movement Evaluation:

A free moving horse in a round pen can tell you a lot with close observation. 1.) The way he responds to me indicates his state of mind toward a human leader. 2.) His conformation and muscular development is evident in his movements and provides me with information I need to know for his training. 3.) It will reveal any muscle tightness, lameness, or out of balance movements.



Above: Demonstrating balance in hand

First Step of Training:

I prefer Resistance Free® round pen training to begin the relationship of order and trust between me and the student. The terminology “Resistance Free®” reflects the psychology, style, and method of training that Mr. Richard Shrake introduced to horsemen some 45 years ago. He not only trademarked the term but set in motion teachings that have been taught on steadily for the past 20-25 years in various applications and named identities from Holistic Horsemanship to Natural Horsemanship to Horse Whispering from Mr. Monte Roberts and Mr. Ray Hunt and countless others right on up to our own Larry Whitesell. My application of the concept of Resistance Free® in round pen training and evaluation is establishing my authority and control without being mechanically attached to the horse in any way. Round pen Resistance Free® training aids our herding animal in identifying us as his herd leader, which sets the course for communicating in a manner that is natural for him to comprehend and fundamentally sets in order your relationship with him, draws his respect, and earns his trust. With proper application, you are introduced to his herd and he learns how he fits into the pecking order with you.

The Path of Lesser Resistance:

This is step two of Resistance Free® teaching – making “easy” what you want him to do and making “difficult” what you don’t want him to do! The Path of Lesser Resistance is the path I want him to see and choose throughout the rest of his teaching and training.

Sacking Out

While in the round pen and after I have all Resistance Free® applications established and settled in my horse, I move forward with building the horse’s trust while sacking him out. This is intended to teach him to respond to any stimuli with an educated response rather than an uneducated reaction. In this controlled environment, we want to defuse the initial flight instinct of our partner and teach him an educated response to negative stimuli. We introduce stimuli that we know will enlist his natural flight reaction – teaching him that those stimuli won’t harm him. At the same time, we are building his confidence in us by showing him that some instincts of flight are not necessary for him to remain safe.

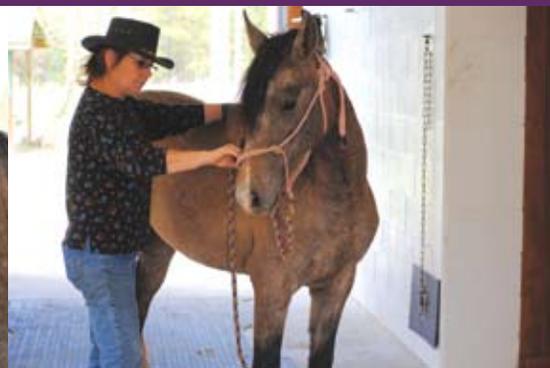
Hobbling

I also take this time to laterally hobble my horse to teach him not to struggle with restraints for his own safety. Some time in his life, he will get tangled up in something. Teaching him not to fight when his legs are restrained will provide a safety net that will reduce bodily harm. Over the years, I have ultimately used this kind of hobbling for a million purposes and toward different ends.

High Line or Picket Line

A high line or picket line is a rope tightly stretched above the ground between two or more tall objects (posts, trees, buildings, etc.) that provide a safe ground environment for the horse. We safely tie a horse to the high line with a lead line equipped with a quick snap and an appropriately adjusted rope halter. To me, an

Below: (First photo) 18 month old filly center poll flexion while backing. (Following photos) Flexing laterally in hand





appropriately adjusted rope halter is just loose enough to lie softly but fits snugly without creating any direct pressure anywhere. Once tied to the high line, I allow about six inches slack in the

rope to allow a place for the horse to stand without pressure on his head. I do not leave him unattended in this teaching and do not leave him tied too long in the initial steps.

In this process, we give him the opportunity to teach himself how to find the place of no resistance for his head which assists us in all handling maneuvers with him in halter. Also, while tied to this flexible standard, he teaches himself to respond to pressure on the rope halter which builds toward teaching in-hand lateral and center flexion, forward movement, backing movement, as well as poll pressure response. Over time, it also teaches him patience.

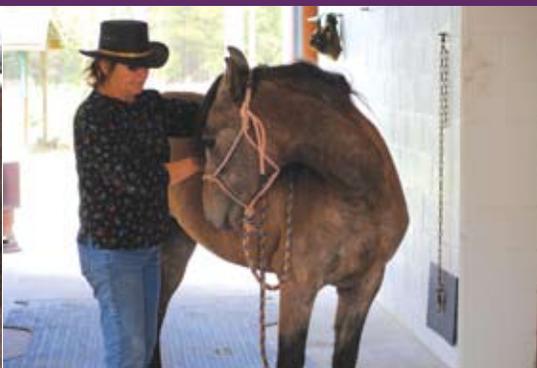
Teaching Balance In-Hand

Teaching balance from the ground and in-hand is another optional fundamental that helps to establish appropriate space while handling from the ground, and it also begins to build proper flexion with movement and balance from his poll to his hips. At the outlay, my student must first know or be taught "standing" lateral flexion and poll response and to move responsively in-hand for forward and backward movement.

For example: One exercise I use toward achieving this task is to ask the horse to circle me on a hard, packed ground surface by encouraging him to move forward, propelling from the rear, flexing his head, poll, neck, shoulder, rib cage, flank, and hips toward the center of the circle. Depending on his flexibility, we



Above: Mature horses on a high line



may tighten the circle or open it up, raise or lower his head, or even press into him, requiring both forward and lateral movement to achieve each level of stretching and flexion to find appropriate balance. The goal is relaxed flexion of his whole body with forward motion propelling from the rear. With this there will be a crossing over of both front and back legs while circling you tightly. When this technique is applied slowly with pull and release actions, the horse is stretched and set up to find proper balance from the ground. I have found that if you have the opportunity to teach this when you wean and halter break, it helps you move toward your goals much easier down the road. I like for a horse to be flexible, able to engage, and able to find balance in-hand really well before I begin to ride him.



Lunging

My intent is to have a horse circle me in various radius lengths in all forward speeds as relaxed as possible and upon command. What is the purpose? To build upon a light mechanical control in order to “stretch” a horse from the ground when there is no round pen available. I prefer to teach this at weaning time and build upon it off and on until I begin to saddle him. When I saddle him, he is already trained and knows what I expect.

Horses are like people, they get stiff and sore. When I have hauled off, ridden in new terrain and lived in strange circumstances, I know my horses are going to be sore mentally and physically. I want to give them a chance to stretch and work out their mental and physical kinks before I ever determine to ride off into the wild blue yonder. If the lunging isn't as effective as I need, I will run through the necessary stretching exercises. I may also only work him lightly and then put him up for that day.

While teaching this, I use a pole to help my arms extend longer and to slow down excessive forward speed by making him make smaller circles around me. Sometimes a youngster will get too much forward speed and try to run off. The pole will help me to hold him when I could not accomplish that same feat with my own strength. It also aids in teaching him to reverse directions by facing you without any excessive pulling. We want our student



to be conscious of the head pressure applied with a halter; he cannot pull away from you, even when long distances from you.

Ponying

When a student is managing in-hand well, I like to begin ponying him in the farm surroundings to introduce him to new environments. This prepares his mind to embrace new things without fear. Using a mature pony horse will help provide stability for the youngster, which encourages confidence in new environments. If possible, I may also stable the pony horse with the student during this stage of his development.

Spending the Night Away From Home!

As early as possible, I expose youngsters to facets of their future life while paired with mature horses by hauling them to different environments to be stalled, tied out on a high-line, or held in an electric fence tape confinement.

Stay tuned for the second part of Millie's Paso Fino Sport Horse training system in the next issue of Paso Fino Horse World magazine.



THE PASO FINO SPORT HORSE PART II

By Millie Hopkins, Professional Paso Fino Trainer

1st through 6th Grade: Building a Saddle Horse, Physical and Mental Objectives

Confidence – Control – Balance: Once our student is confident with saddling/riding and we can control his movements confidently, we immediately begin to encourage and assist him to achieve “balance” as much as possible. Our goal is to do this successfully with him in a relaxed state of body and mind.

New Environments as a Tool: As soon as our student’s body and mind matures and he is trusting and confident with being tied-out, round pen work, ponying, hobbling, etc. and is able to perform basics under saddle such as big circles, stops, at least a few steps back, and all forward speeds with confidence, we introduce him to new environments outside of the round pen and arena to expand his mental ability while applying all of his teachings under saddle upon command.

For example: In this new environment, we may stop him anywhere and everywhere and ask for him to “stand” for small increments of time. While stopped, we may flex laterally and back a step or two. We also may require him to allow us to mount and dismount on both sides. We may engage in turning left and right around different objects. We present a series of exercises we know he can confidently execute into that environment, building for perfected execution but careful to ask and require what we know he is capable to successfully give. We must not put more emotional pressure on him in this new environment than he can handle. With some students, we can ask most all of the exercises we know he can perform in one lesson and others we can ask only a few of them. They all respond to the new environment with different levels of confidence and security. If a horse is significantly insecure and immature we will introduce him to that environment by ponying him. We will use the pony horse later to give confidence even after we are riding him in that same environment.

Now Completing the 3rd Grade!

Our student is moving forward, stopping, backing, and circling confidently and successfully applying all levels of training to this point. He is relaxed and listening in different environments.

4th - 6th Grade: Learning Lateral/Longitudinal Exercises

After we are certain the student has sufficiently developed physically and mentally to confidently deliver all that’s instructed and expected of him in various surroundings, we return to the



ABOVE: Relaxed Collection While Turning with appropriate bending of the head, poll, neck, shoulders, rib cage, and hip towards the center of the circle.



ABOVE: Mature Horse Maneuvering on cue easily walking over one log and then jumping when asked. taught in arena first and will apply in other environments.



ABOVE: Mature Horse jumping when asked.

round pen and arena to begin to teach a gamut of maneuvers/exercises that stretch and relax him.

These exercises begin appropriate muscle development with nice flexion and enable the horse to most easily find “balance” with the rider. (Refer to: Betty Lindquist for Horses in Motion Human - Equine Exercise Physiologist - www.lindquistforhorses.com.) These exercises are KEY to my approach in building a sound flexible attentive mount. Technically, these exercises are modified descriptives of dressage maneuvers designed for longitudinal applications meant to help flexibility, suppleness, and range of motion through lateral flexing. They are arranged in a progressive order and simplified for easy application. I also apply vertical flexion of the poll and neck in this process.

These components combined successfully will set the course to appropriately build the student for the best balance, strength, and longevity that a Sport Horse must display. When these exercises are consistently practiced and applied, a horse will begin to gain body core and appendage strength and flexibility, and he will also discover true balance with a rider. He will also be relaxed and confident.

Results of Lateral and Longitudinal Exercises

Lateral and longitudinal exercises stretch and loosen the body and mind while teaching the body to respond to different cues. They also help to divide the mechanics of the horse’s locomotion into quarters (front, right and left sides/rear, right and left sides) which enables us to be able to control him, laterally, diagonally, and vertically. This education coupled with gained flexibility and responsiveness helps the trainer teach the student to find balance to execute any maneuver with a rider on his back in symmetry.

“Finding balance” is discovering the “sweet-spot” where a maneuver is executed with little to no resistance in the horse’s bodily performance or the rider’s position and seat. The easiest way I know how to help visualize “balance” is to think of any playground equipment that has a platform that spins. Everyone has experienced being on the end of the spin. The further you are from the middle, the stronger the g forces; gravity pulls you outward and if you don’t hold on, you get thrown off. If you

position yourself to the center of the spinning platform, you can more easily stand balanced without having to hold on. This same place of centered gravity is where a horse must function to perform a balanced, resistance free maneuver. This point varies a bit with different exercises, so in order for a horse to perform it well, the rider must also be balanced.

[KEY]: The rider/trainer must be physically flexible and know balance in order for the horse to find and achieve balance and symmetry for both himself and his rider.

When properly applied, these exercises TEACH and TRAIN to find balance in a maneuver. In fact, I found that once taught to find balance, a horse will CHOOSE and work on his own volition to find balance, because execution is easier!

Balance achieved means:

- You, along with the horse, have discovered an unimpeded/resistance free movement with you astride his back!
- A softness and fluidity in motion that motivates you, the rider, to search and find symmetry in every maneuver application.
- Success FELT by both horse and rider.
- Suppleness achieved.
- Physical and emotional reward.
- Building upon the resistance free foundation you grounded him in - in the round pen!
- Both the horse and rider are listening and their sensitivity is amplified.
- Both the horse and rider exhibit relaxed body posture.
- Extreme collection with amplified, accelerated movement in execution.

[KEY] If not noticed before, in this phase you will see his mind seriously begin to engage and partner with you. This is a more advanced level of partnering. In this phase, your student will begin to show you significant advancements toward maturing and developing with you. He will now be listening to you for your instruction with a purpose to understand and with an eagerness to respond appropriately, knowing that execution will be easy.



Cheri Prill Photo

7th and 8th Grade: Applying the Lateral and Longitudinal Exercises

As the student gains confidence with our instructions and his ability to respond and execute the exercises in the arena and round pen, we return to various environments to build upon that teaching, engaging in environmental challenges that require application of the same cues, movement and action demanded in these exercises.



ABOVE: 8th grade graduate - New environment working up and down hills and finding good balance while building the top line muscles.

For example: As we pass anything that he may be unsure of or possibly afraid of on his left side, we will apply setting him up in a diagonal moving posture and work toward forward movement in lateral flexion as we pass the object with his body flexion away from the object (to the right) to disengage a flighty response as we pass. Not immediately, but sometime later in that ride, we will practice the same exercises coming from the other direction. In this application, we have redirected his mind, begun to defuse his emotional reaction, and readied his mind for an educated mental and physical response to a new stimulus. We have set his body up so that we can control it and if necessary, defuse an unacceptable bodily reaction by using exercises we taught him in the arena.

As he matures and develops appropriate muscling and extensive flexibility of mind and body to perform, we then move to the more advanced exercise maneuvers and longer riding sessions.

Note: At every level of accomplishment, a vital part of the teaching and training includes repeating what they know and have confidence to apply while appropriately stretching them to do more things and accomplish more as we go.

Goal: My goal is to challenge and mature the student's mind sufficiently but not over challenge it while challenging his body to grow and develop in the most efficient manner at the same time. To do this, I apply an educated mix of mental and physical exercise and execution demands in a lesson to squeeze in as much practice as I can on each without overloading his brain. This aids to develop his mind and body in FUN ways and eases the pressure and boredom that can easily arise from spending too much time in the arena or round pen doing simple, repetitive maneuvers.

For example: rather than engage in a group of repetitive exercises in the arena to "back a horse" in the correct execution to stretch and develop the top line strength, I may "collect" the horse and ride him down steep grades and around trees on the way up and down for that day's exercise to help build his musculature to back more easily.

Another example: In order to work on bending, flexion, and proper body balance, I ride through a dense forest of trees with challenging terrain that require him to find his way through and over things by using combinations of exercises learned. (Up-hill and down-hill is a more challenging rendition of this exercise.) When I do this, I set him up as balanced as I can to enter and execute appropriately. Once engaged, the environment demands that he apply his own natural responses to move through. As soon as I feel his body preparing, I apply the appropriate cues for the exercise application that the action demands. This action begins to connect the fundamentals of teachings to complex riding applications without the mental and emotional pressure of asking for the same numbers of commands in a round pen or arena.



ABOVE: Side Pass - Result of training leg yield and spiral out exercise for a controlled lateral movement. Less amplified will present a diagonal

9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Grade!

In general, a horse needs to be under saddle approximately two years to learn, absorb, and apply all that has been instructed at this point efficiently and with maturity. In this time frame, it is important to be consistent and build upon combinations of the primary steps to educate for more complex applications.

Troubleshooting: At any level, if you ask for more than he can give, you may be either asking too much too fast, haven't established the basics necessary to perform the maneuver correctly, are not communicating to him in a way that he understands, may

not be consistent with your manner of asking, or you may be failing to reward him properly for understanding and attempting the action after a command.

9th Grade: Apply the training to experience. At this point, your student has their basics down. They are reasonably fit and able mentally and physically to accomplish many tasks and challenges. Now we begin to establish and mature them by exposing them to as much diversity in every fashion provide – housing, terrain, and various sorts of situations and conditions according to their level of confident application.

10th Grade: As they mature in their abilities and become more confident in their training, I begin to ride them in more challenging environments and for longer periods of time. Every weakness and strength will really show up at this level. I spend the remaining time addressing and finishing the details to complete the building of a confident, flexible partner.

11th Grade: The goal is an educated and developed, balanced and symmetrical athlete who is fully vested with YOU as his leader who embraces challenges. He will easily perform diverse, complex ground maneuvers with a pliable body, easy collection, and flexion with a soft mouth. By the end of this stage we should be able to relax and perform for a long time and to amplify and collect in small increments in a multitude of environments as a successfully vested partner.

12th Grade: Ultimately, by the end of this season, I will be able to successfully ride and engage this animal 4-6 hours at a time on consecutive days and/or weeks in extreme environments, in extreme terrain challenges, and situational challenges with extensive combinations of both relaxed and amplified collection. He will thrive in it emotionally and physically. He will be emotionally mature to safely travel and live in different environments. Note: This kind of training requires a great deal of individual and personal investment in each animal. The animals that excel in this environment are very intelligent, vested, and highly tuned. They are extensively prepared to move forward into Sport Horse agendas.

Note: While the trained Sport Horse can be ridden by novices and amateurs under the oversight of an experienced rider handler, his daily handling and riding requires an experienced and skilled rider and handler.

I find today that there is a demand for hot, matured, and trained athletically bred Pleasure/Performance gaited saddle horses – from the tightly gaited show ring candidate to the more extended mover.

Success is ONLY dependent upon the right kind of candidate, good training, and market invasion. A well-trained, partnering Paso Fino exhibiting extraordinary skills and extreme abilities reflecting excellence in training and breed presentation is a joy to watch in any event and appreciated by real horsemen and women from any discipline. They literally draw the new market. The Sport Horse opportunity is unlimited for a multitude of applications for the Trainer, Breeder, Clinician, Exhibitor, or Promoter in undeveloped markets. While I have had good results, I have only begun to scratch the surface by training for a wide base of performances and enjoyments with well-bred, well-gaited athletes. When my horses do hit the market, people are impressed, interested, and want to know more! My horses marketed in 2003 for \$4500, and by 2009, the horses with the same training sold from \$10-\$25,000. The Sport Horse's value is determined by conformation, bloodlines, gaiting ability, gender, temperament, athleticism, and training.

The Paso Fino Sport Horse reaches new markets, from the working cowboy who needs a smoother ride to the dressage rider/eventer/hunter jumper who wants something different but to still use the facets of their old market to the endurance and competitive trail riders who ride long and hard but are tired of the trot. All of them love the agility, heart, and stamina of the smoothly gaited Paso Fino and can enjoy the kind of riding they want but on a new and different kind of horse.

I challenge you! Train for it. Take a string of very sharp competitors and ride extensively in a new market. With this action, you will ignite activity that will send you "elbows and coat-tails" into a new season trying to keep up! Plus, you will have a blast! It is so much fun watching an experienced horseman from another discipline SEE and FEEL what the Paso Fino can do for his own pleasure, need, and enjoyment! The money is good too!

I'm looking forward to seeing you and our best stock everywhere with training that reflects the excellence of exceptional horsemen! If you have any further questions, I can be reached via my website: www.pasofinosporthorse.com. And as they say down here, "Until I can thank you better, I thank you ever so much" for your time and considerations! God bless you.



ABOVE: Closing a gate