

DRESSAGE MODIFIERS: What They Are & How To Use Them To Your Advantage!

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From A Judge's Point Of View

As an Equine Canada (EC) "S" Combined Driving Judge, an EC "M" Dressage Judge, and an EC "Competition Coach Specialist Dressage", I would like to share some of my points of view as a Dressage judge. So much of ridden dressage judging has its roots and is applicable to driven dressage judging.

Modifiers in a Dressage Test

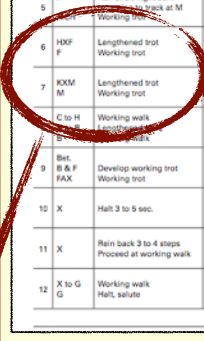
In a dressage tests, modifiers are not something out of a grammar lesson! In judging dressage, modifiers are the connecting pieces between the major patterns or movements asked for in a dressage tests. For example, in a Preliminary Level Test the movements says:

- "HXF Lengthen Trot" with the directives asking for 'Straightness, balance in transitions, lengthening of frame & stride, consistent rhythm'
- "F Working Trot"
- The next movement starts with "KXM".

So, what do you do between F and K? There are 2 corners and a short side. What you do in this part of the arena is still being judged! This part of the dressage test is referred to as the "modifiers".

The key component of the mark is the K to M Lengthen Trot for which you will be richly rewarded with an 8+. However, if you do not pay attention to the modifiers (2 corners and short side), you could lose a mark and drop by "1"! Or, if a judge is thinking a mark could be "7" or "8", nail those modifiers, and your score will be "8".

If you read the dressage tests rather than just look at the diagrams on the back of the judge's sheet, you



GAITS AND MOVEMENTS		FOR USE BY SCRIBE ONLY:		INSTRUCTIONS	
MOVEMENT	TEST	DIRECTIVE IDEAS	MAX PTS	POINTS	REMARKS
1	A X C	Enter working trot Halt, salute	10		
2	X C	Proceed working trot Track left	10		
3	K	Half circle left 20m returning to track at H	10		
4	HMF	Working trot	10		
5	F	Half circle right 20m returning to track at M	10		
6	HXF F	Lengthened trot Working trot	10		
7	KXM M	Lengthened trot Working trot	10		
8	C to H	Working walk Halt, salute	10 x 2		
9	Bet. B & F FAX	Develop working trot Working trot	10		
10	X	Halt 3 to 5 sec.	10		
11	X	Rein back 3 to 4 steps Proceed at working walk	10		
12	X to G G	Working walk Halt, salute	10		

will find that almost every movement leaves a gap to get to the next scored movement. Each of these connecting pieces is a modifier that can enhance your dressage score.

So, modifiers are referred to as "crossing the t's and dotting the i's" to keep those extra marks that you have earned, or do not lose marks for poor modifiers. Judges should emphasize the major movement first, and the modifiers last but even with this minor attention there is room for losing unnecessary marks. If driven dressage adopts the half mark scoring system as is currently used in ridden dressage, then it would be very reasonable for a judge to drop half marks on poor modifiers or add half marks for good modifiers.

Good modifiers are like good writing; they enhance the story and capture the attention of the reader. In this case they capture the attention of the dressage judge!