

# Working Equitation



text by: Minna Lindström  
photos: Loretta Fitz

Paulo Bastos is a versatile horseman from Portugal, but he lives and works in Sweden today. In addition to classical riding and working equitation he has gathered experience and developed his skills widely, in different areas of riding. In addition to training and teaching, Paulo also competes, sells horses and breeds Lusitanos.

**I** "I started riding when I was 11 years old, by influence of my father. Horses were a great passion of my father, an amateur rider. Since Portugal has a strong tradition of classical riding, I was fortunate enough to receive professional teaching from the beginning. After training in a riding school for several years, I got the opportunity to train a private horse for horseball matches. Later I was accepted into a university where I competed in dressage, jumping and three day events. After only one year of studying, I began working for a breeder."

"During the years I have worked in several large stud-farms and trained various different horses. At the same time I have always tried to evaluate and improve my own methods to suit different horses, different goals and different students. I also want to improve myself as a show rider."

"Nowadays I compete in dressage, train the Swedish Working Equitation Team and educate horses, some just in training, others for sale. Our beautiful Lusitano stallion has recently been classified as the best stallion in Scandinavia and we already have several owners interested in using him for their mares so we'll start a breeding program with Lusitano horses next year."

## Classical dressage and working equitation are two different things

"What is commonly denominated classical dressage is a type of riding that is strongly based in the old principles of riding left to us by the Masters from the past. Many of these principles are and will always be important, and should be used for all horses. In classical dressage the riders are encouraged to think and work in a different way from the traditional style, the main goal being a collected horse with a contact as

light as possible. The horse is meant to 'dance' with the rider, whose aids are efficient but invisible. Obviously, the 'world of horses', its methods, goals and financial thinking have changed as time passes. What this has led to is, that while certain principles are based on classical riding, they have become twisted, since the followers haven't been able to put them into practice correctly, leading them astray from what classical dressage should be."

"Classical dressage is a way of thinking, its goal a horse that is relaxed and cooperative, with a light contact. This is something I learned right at the beginning. The first day I rode with reins, my teacher said to me: 'If you want a soft horse, you must have soft hands'. This has been the basis of my entire learning process."



Zalamero during the speed test in WE

Paulo Bastos and Lusitano stallion Zalamero taking the ring from the bull in WE

”Working equitation, on the other hand, is a sport based on the challenges that riders have faced when working on cattle ranches. Working equitation requires good physical and mental basic work, so the horse and rider can face all challenges from dressage to technique and speed tests. On more challenging levels, the tasks are performed using just one hand. In dressage trials the exercises are by far the same as in ’normal’ dressage. The technique part has various different obstacles - gates, slalom, a wooden bull, side passes and so on. In the speed test the same obstacles are cleared as fast as possible. In team competitions, the goal is to separate a previously marked cow from the herd with the aid of your teammates.

”I started practicing working equitation five years ago. I think it’s really fun, and challenging at the same time – I believe my horses agree”

These two concepts certainly suit any horse and rider. I can offer the wide variety of horses that I train here in Sweden as an example: from Icelandic horses to Nordsvensks, from half-bloods to Lusitanos, and riders from beginner to advanced levels. Certain breeds, like Lusitano, are bred for this kind of work, of course, but all types of horse can benefit from it.”

## Iberian breeds are not all the same

”The Lusitano is basically more elastic than the Pura Raza Espanola (PRE). It’s lighter by type as well, and easier to ride. These differences are said to be due to the fact that Lusitanos were initially bred for war, and later for bull fights, so they’ve become a very functional and agile breed. The PRE, meanwhile, has been bred for

beauty and impressive appearance, so they have a bigger neck and higher knee action. The selection criteria are different today, and correct and fluid movements are desirable in both breeds, along with a capacity for extensions to the level of sports horses, all without losing the elasticity and capacity for collection. Although I’ve had a few good PREs, I prefer the Lusitano for its generosity and eagerness to please.”

## A good temperament and a cooperative spirit are the most important qualities in a horse

”The most important qualities of a horse depend on the task for which we want to use him, but a good temperament and a cooperative spirit are desirable, no matter what the goal. For dressage, as an example, it’s obvious that for a high performance dressage horse, the quality of gaits is very important. But what is the point of having a horse with

brilliant movements, if you can’t ride him? There are countless examples of horses with fantastic physical possibilities, that never succeeded due to their difficult temperament. Often, the rider’s skills are insufficient, which leads into conflicts, which then make the horse less willing to work. Working with a cooperative horse is undoubtedly easier, and such a horse can oftentimes even overcome his own physical difficulties.”



Paulo Bastos and lusitano stallion Zulu training in the fields

”The goal of training is to allow the horse to use its body in a wholesome, relaxed and pleasant way, while simultaneously allowing the rider to educate and develop it. A horse that needs constant, strong corrections cannot be considered to be a well-educated horse.”

”My dream horse is Zulu, a stallion with an amazing charisma and all the qualities I was looking for. Zulu is not only beautiful, he also has great physical potential, such as a tremendous capacity for collection, and a very strong, but positive mind. He’s a generous horse, and willing to do anything to please the rider, as a true Lusitano should be. We’ll start using Zulu for breeding in 2011, and we hope his fine qualities will perpetuate and improve with future generations.”

## The way to harmony

”I believe that to develop our riding skills we need a mixture of curiosity and respect for the horse. We have to be able to experiment in order to find new sensations and innovations, but we must never forget that respect for the horse comes first. Without mutual respect we will never achieve true cooperation.”


”The old Latin saying ’mens sana in corpore sano’ represents the connection between a healthy mind and a healthy body. The most important thing when working with a horse is that a connection is established between the body and the mind, leading to harmony. A relaxed horse will work better, just as a horse that has worked well will become happier and more relaxed.”

”The most common challenges are usually related to the rider, not the horse. Horses react very quickly to different styles of riding, but it’s more difficult for the rider to change their own style, and correct the mistakes that have often been acquired many years ago. Learning is a gradual process, which requires concentration from the rider, so that mistakes are not repeated.”

”Since every horse and every rider is different, I constantly have to find different ways to work with them. I enjoy this challenge, and at the same time it’s gratifying to observe the student’s progress. The motivation comes from the satisfaction when I see the evolution, which can exceed my expectations manifold.”



Paulos Bastos and Zalamero in a garrocha demonstration

A man with dark hair, wearing a red jacket, is looking up at a dark-colored horse with a long, flowing mane. The horse is standing in a stable, with wooden stall bars visible in the background. The man's hands are near the horse's head, and he appears to be in conversation with it.

## Paulo Bastos is living his dream

”“We are currently based in Sigtuna, the oldest village in Sweden. It is a beautiful place less than an hour away from Stockholm. We’re renting a stable where we have a riding-hall, a walking machine, big paddocks and a gallop track. I moved to Sweden after an invitation to work in a Lusitano centre where I stayed for two years. After this I decided to start my own business, so I began taking in horses for training and selling. I also give riding lessons. The daily routines consist of giving lessons, working the horses four to six times per week, depending on the horse, and traveling around to find potentially interesting horses to buy.”

“My goal and dream is to continue this project we have started with the Lusitano horses. It includes breeding as well as competitions and shows. For the last three years, the best Lusitano horses in Sweden have been sold or shown by us. We want to continue to help our friends find the best horses for them. At the same time we will continue to prepare for competitions with our warmbloods, aiming to take them to the highest levels.” 

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*“Good horsemanship is to give the horse a happy and balanced life, having fun together with the horse while not forgetting about their needs and respecting them above all as individuals, with different temperament and physical potentials. The most important characteristic in a horseman is to be able to listen to the horse.”*

Paulo Bastos and Lusitano stallion Turco