

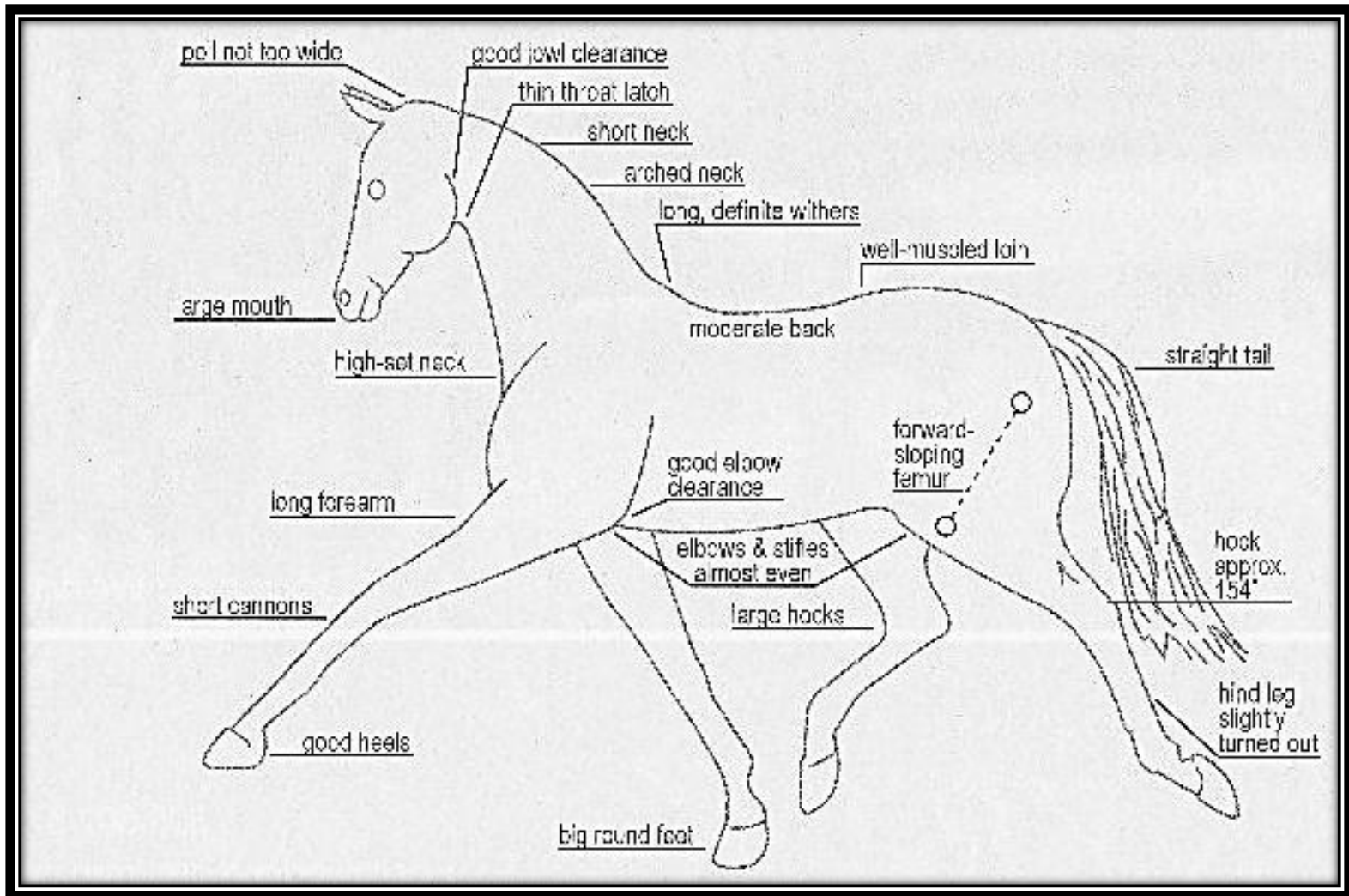
# Developing The Young Dressage Horse



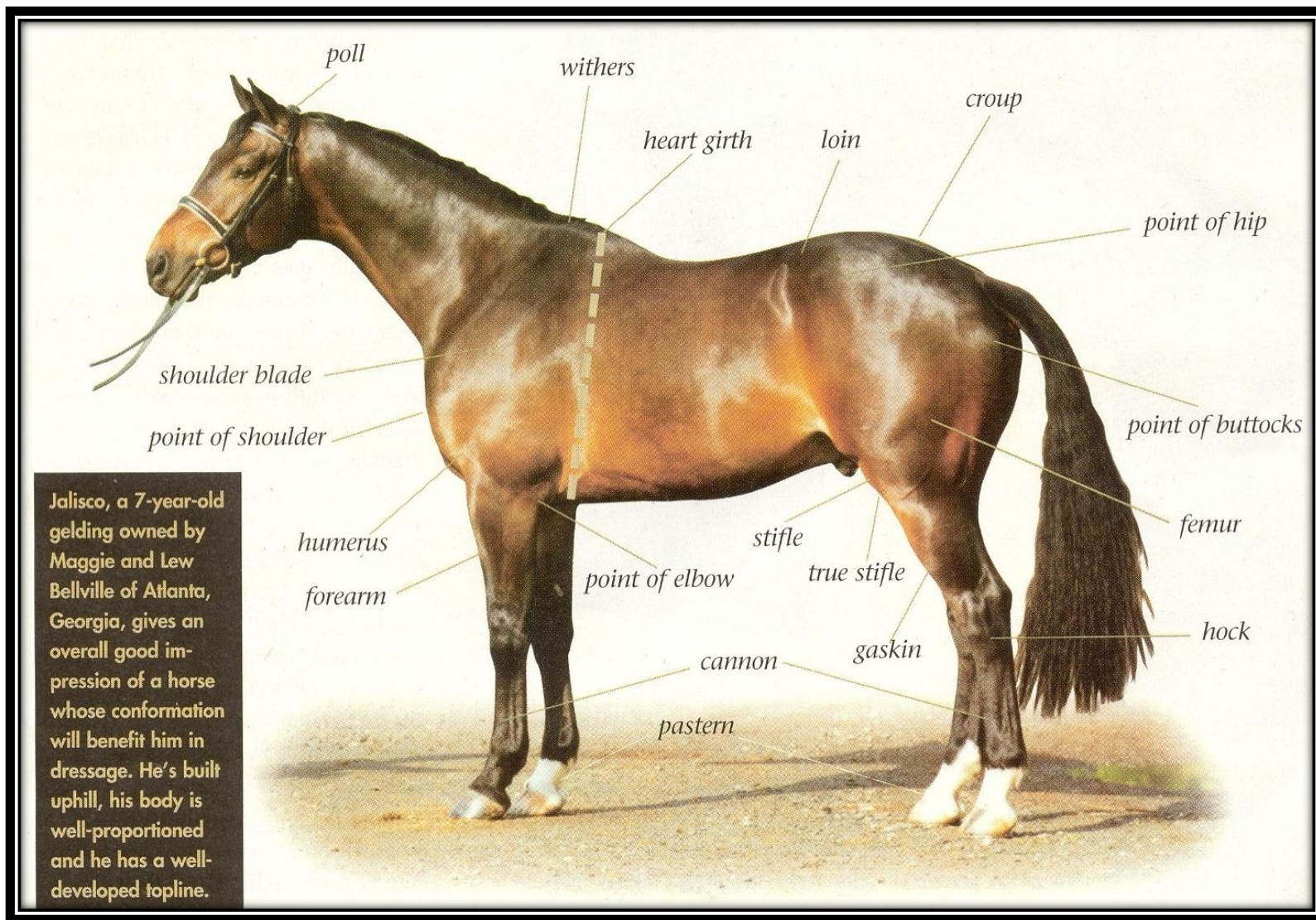
BW-Callista, 2006, 4-Year-Old National Champion

# Ideal Dressage Horse Conformation

From USDF Connection, November 2006



# Ideal Dressage Horse Conformation Continued



# Preparing The Young Horse For Under Saddle Work

- All training decisions are contingent on the maturity and physical development of the individual horse.
- In general we work our horses:
  - 3 years of age, 3 days per week
  - 4 years of age, 4 days per week
  - 5 years of age, 5 days per week
- Several months prior to backing, we begin fitness training. Options include:
  - Free running on the flat and over raised cavalletti in a safe arena with good footing
  - Free Jumping
  - AquaPacer



# Backing The Young Horse

- Introduce tack
- Lunge and free run in tack
- Backing Sequence
  - Lay over the horse
  - Sit up
  - Rider is lead
  - Rider is lunged
  - Rider works with a ground person
- Early Training Goals
  - Forward and straight
  - Transition the horse from the ground person to the rider's aids
  - Encourage the horse to seek contact with the bit
  - Encourage the horse to stretch down and forward

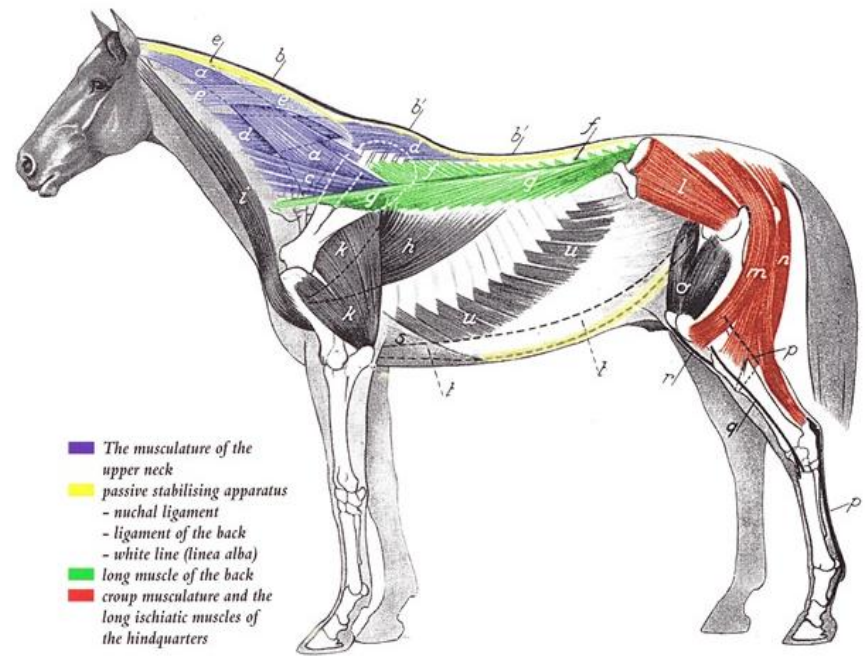


# Backing The Young Horse Continued

The nuchal ligament becomes the primary supporting structure in the young horse



3-year-old, 4 months under saddle



- The musculature of the upper neck
- passive stabilising apparatus
  - nuchal ligament
  - ligament of the back
  - white line (linea alba)
- long muscle of the back
- croup musculature and the long ischiatic muscles of the hindquarters

Fig. 4 (page 30):

The important muscles of the neck, back and the hindquarters of the left side of a horse from the rider's point of view. Some of the superficial muscles are deliberately shown smaller than their true size so that the deeper muscles can also be seen.

- |       |  |       |   |
|-------|--|-------|---|
| a     | Supporting muscle of the head, <i>M. semispinalis capitis</i>      | n     | caudal long ischium muscle, <i>M. semitendinosus</i>  |
| b, b' | Nuchal ligament  | o     | stabilising and extensor muscle of the stifle joint, <i>M. quadriceps femoris</i>   |
| c + d | The long supporting muscles of the neck,                           | p + q | the tendinous connecting muscles between stifle and hock joints,  |
| c     | long neck muscle, <i>M. longissimus cervicis</i>                   | p     | the almost entirely tendinous superficial digital flexor (flexor of the 2nd phalanx) <i>M. flexor digitalis pedis superficialis</i> |
| d     | withers muscle, <i>M. spinalis</i>                                 | q     | flexor tendon of the foot, <i>Tendo femoro tarseus</i>  |
| e     | spleen-shaped muscle, <i>M. splenius</i>                           | r     | stifle joint  |
| f     | dorsal serrate muscle made up of many strips, <i>M. multifidus</i> | s     | deep thorax-humerus muscle, <i>M. pectoralis humeri ascendens</i>   |
| g     | long back muscle, <i>M. longissimus dorsi</i>                      | t     | straight abdominal muscle, <i>M. rectus abdominis</i>   |
| h     | broad back muscle, <i>M. latissimus dorsi</i>                      | u     | external oblique abdominal muscle, <i>M. obliquus abdominis externus</i>  |
| i     | head-neck-arm muscle, <i>M. brachiocephalicus</i>                  |       |   |
| k     | extensor of the elbow, <i>Mm. anconaei</i>                         |       |   |
| l     | large buttock muscle, <i>M. gluteus medius</i>                     |       |   |
| m     | lateral long muscle of the ischium, <i>M. biceps femoris</i>       |       |   |

Important muscles of the neck, back and hindquarters. *From The Rider Forms The Horse* by Udo Burger and Otto Zietzschmann.

# Acclimate The Young Horse

- Working outdoors. Work on uneven footing helps the horse develop proprioception and coordination
- Working with other horses
- Working away from home

## The Goal Of Training

- Progressively and systematically increase the horse's carrying and pushing power, so collection can be achieved. This illustrated in the piaffe.



- Enjoy this [video](#) of world champion, Moorlands Totilas