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Starting the Youngsters This Winter

By Frank Selinger

Breeding Warmbloods has been a tradition and passion in my family since the 1960's. My father Josef Selinger imported the first Hanoverian stallion in 1960, and continues to this day, along with his wife Edda, to breed Canadian Warmbloods with Holstein origins.

Personally I have been at it for a dozen or so years, and recently I found myself needing to break the babies solo for the first time in a long time.

On the first day I gathered up my three year olds from their pastures, building a very portable round pen in my arena. I reminded them on day one of previous lessons taught. Thankfully I had the good fortune of time when they were two years old to round pen and lunge them.

Day two involved bridling and saddling in the morning, and more of the same in the afternoon. No flies in the ointment as of yet!

Day three required me to drive them in the round pen (two lunge lines through driving rings to the bit, standing behind the horse walking along), teaching them voice commands and steering. All showed cleverness and willingness to please.

Day four was a repeat of the previous day, except I used the entire arena. The babies were doing patterns around the jumps and happily were resisting any urge to 'water ski' me around the ring.

My other duties preempted their training for a couple of days, but when it was time to continue I pulled in my extra tall mounting block. Standing on it, I lay on the saddle with my belly, patting and whispering compliments by the bushel. All three rather enjoyed this part.

The next day was the moment of truth - time to climb aboard. Of course I had numerous negative thoughts to discard. Two positive ideas stuck with me: the first was that the horses trusted me implicitly by now, so I should do the same in return; and the second was an old cliché, "A coward dies a thousand deaths but a brave man only once!"

I am happy to say they remained perfect angels, not budging at the mounting phase and happy to walk around my round pen.

After just two days of that, the entire indoor arena was at my disposal.

I must say that having bred and raised these babies, I was rewarded with immense pride and enjoyment seeing their great progression.

They are now my best buddies and I their mentor.

