Arena Rules:
(Or how to avoid a collision between riders in the warm-up arena!)

By Susanne Lauda

To be safe in the warm-up arena, there is a lot for a rider to know. Before you enter an arena where there are already other riders, you should to call out: "Entrance free?" The person who is riding closest to the gate should respond,. "Entrance is free," before you can safely enter the arena.

When mounting and dismounting inside the warm-up or schooling area (as well as tightening the girth), this operation should be done on the centerline with you horse standing parallel to the short side of the arena with the rider on the centerline. If several horses are being mounted (dismounted) at the same time, they have to stand parallel to each other with a minimum distance of 3 meters/10 feet. Their heads will form a straight line.

Riders should always maintain a safe distance between the horse in front of you (one length of a horse) or beside you (3 meters/10 feet). You can check the correct distance between you and the horse in front of you by looking straight between your horse's ears. If you can see the hind hoofs of the horse in front of you, you are at a safe distance.

If you are riding in a walk, you should move away from the outside track and go to the second track (about 10 feet from the outside track), or even to the third track (about 20 feet from the outside track—see explanation further down). In order to slow down from a trot or canter to a walk, you already should be away from the outside track, so that you do not interfere with the rider who is behind you.

Riders on a circle always should yield to riders who are riding straight along the track. Out of courtesy you should always yield to a rider who is performing a very difficult move, i.e. passage or tempi changes.

In Germany, if there are more than three horses in a full-size dressage arena, one rider dictates the lead (direction). It shows good etiquette if this responsibility is given to the most senior rider in the arena. This rider will call for a lead change (change of directions) after about every 5 minutes. Everybody is obliged to change leads (directions) as soon as possible by using any of the known arena figures. No wild maneuvers should be performed in order to change the lead.

If the riders in the arena are riding in both directions, they should pass as on the highway, left shoulder to left shoulder. The rider on the right lead moves over to the second track (10 feet from the outside track), <u>well before</u> the oncoming horse/rider pair has to fear a collision. If you happen to be in a walk on the right lead and somebody who is walking on the second track on the left lead, you should move over to the third track (20 feet from the outside track).

However, please keep in mind that riders on circles ALWAYS yield to riders on the outside track. If riders are riding in opposite directions on a diagonal or on the center line, you always ride so that your left shoulder is facing the oncoming rider's left shoulder. Matter of fact, left shoulder to left shoulder is always an applicable rule, with the exception of circle rules.

If lungeing is allowed in the warm-up or schooling area, it is only permitted if all riders in the arena agree to it. Lunging is not permitted at all if there are more than 3 riders in the arena, or if someone is having a lesson. And lungeing is not permitted in warm-up arenas at competitions and must be done in designated lungeing areas.