

Equifest's Paso Fino Drill Team: Paso Elegante

El Paso Elegante is composed of *all* Paso Fino Horses. The gait of the Paso Fino horse is totally natural and normally exhibited from birth. It is an evenly-spaced four-beat lateral gait with each foot contacting the ground independently in a regular sequence at precise intervals creating a rapid, unbroken rhythm. Executed perfectly, the four hoof beats are absolutely even in both cadence and impact, resulting in unequaled smoothness and comfort for the rider. The Paso Finos are known as "The Rolls Royce of Horses". This drill team was formed in June of 2006 and are sponsored by, and practice at, Caribe Paso Finos in Ocala and El Dorado Paso Finos in Anthony, Florida. They are coached by Diego Bravo of the Ocala School of Equestrian Art. The drill team's all-amateur riders range in age from 10 to 71. The team was formed to showcase the beauty of the Paso Fino horse and to have the opportunity to ride with other Paso Fino enthusiasts.

Riders are: Glenna Struthers on Flint Oak Triumph, Carol Kilburn on Lindeza el Palmar, Roseann Cook on Nagasaki, John Kennedy on Resorte de Casta, Pauline Piazza on Raveno del Rapido, Sarah Piazza on Evita, Janis Paushter on Mercurio de Lusitana, Jose Torres on Monte Vali, Sharon Crouch on Cenicienta de Fantasy, Robin Varney on Princesa del Camael, Jessica Varney on Capitan de Besilu, Melissa Ingram on Patrillero, Carol Perez on Tango del Coco and Diego Bravo on India de Calidad.

The Breed

The traits that people cherish in the Paso Fino today have been a part of it's heritage for over 500 years. Although the Paso Fino has been bred in Latin America since the days of the Conquistadors, this unique horse was virtually unknown in the United States until the late 1940's. A mixture of three European breeds-the Andalusian, the Barb, and the now extinct Spanish Jennet – the ancestors of today's Paso Fino were transported to the New World on the second voyage of Christopher Columbus. They were used by the Conquistador's to carry riders for days over mountains, open ranges, and dense jungles and came to be known as Los Caballos de Paso Fino, "the horse with the fine step".

Today the Paso Fino reflects its Spanish heritage through it's proud carriage, elegance, and natural four-beat gait. Paso Finos can walk, canter, and gallop like other horses, but their preferred way of going is their own natural four beat lateral gait. This gait will produce a wonderfully smooth ride at the three primary speeds: The Classic Fino, Paso Corto, and Paso Largo. During the Classic Fino, the horse holds itself fully collected and balanced. Leg motion is smooth and extravagant, and each hoof hits the ground in rapid succession. It is performed with the same forward impulsion as a slow walk, yet it has rapid footfall. The Paso Corto is the average trail gait and is comparable in speed to a trot. Forward speed is moderate, ground covering, but unhurried, executed with a medium extension and stride. The Paso Largo is the fastest speed, executed with a longer extension, stride and varying degrees of collection. In Paso Fino shows, sounding

boards are used so that judges and spectators can hear and see more closely the clarity of the gait.

Glossary Terms

WARMBLOOD: In general terms, a half-breed, or part-bred horse, the result of an Arabian or Thoroughbred cross with other breeds. Also one of a number of specific breeds of horse which were developed by crossing hotblood and coldblood horses to produce a more refined, but athletically strong and capable horse, such as the Swedish Warmblood, the Dutch Warmblood etc.

COLDBLOOD: Designating any horse or breed of horse without Arabian or eastern blood in its breeding. In practice, since many so-called cold-blooded breeds have been improved by the use of Arab blood, the distinction is based mainly on physical type: broadly, all heavy draft horses and most European native ponies are classed as cold-bloods.