



EQUESTRAIN

Competition Prep Guide

HOW TO PLAN YOUR WORKOUTS & WORK ON YOUR MINDSET



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What's in the guide

Welcome

Hello from your coach & what does rider's competition performance mean.

Weeks 1-6

How to structure your workouts for the first 6 weeks.

Weeks 7-12

How to structure your workouts for the next 6 weeks.

Weeks 13-18

How to structure your workouts for the last 6 weeks.

Mindset

2 different mental coaching tools for motivation, competition nerves and focus.

Nutrition

What to eat on a competition day?

HELSINKI HORSE SHOW COMPETITION PREP GUIDE

WELCOME

One of my favorite quotes of all time is:

“We don’t rise to the level of our goals, we fall to the level of our systems.”

And I know how important goal HIHS is for so many riders. That’s why I wanted to build this guide for every rider who is interested in putting in smart work with their own workouts, mindset and nutrition to make sure they can enter the ring confident and come out smiling.

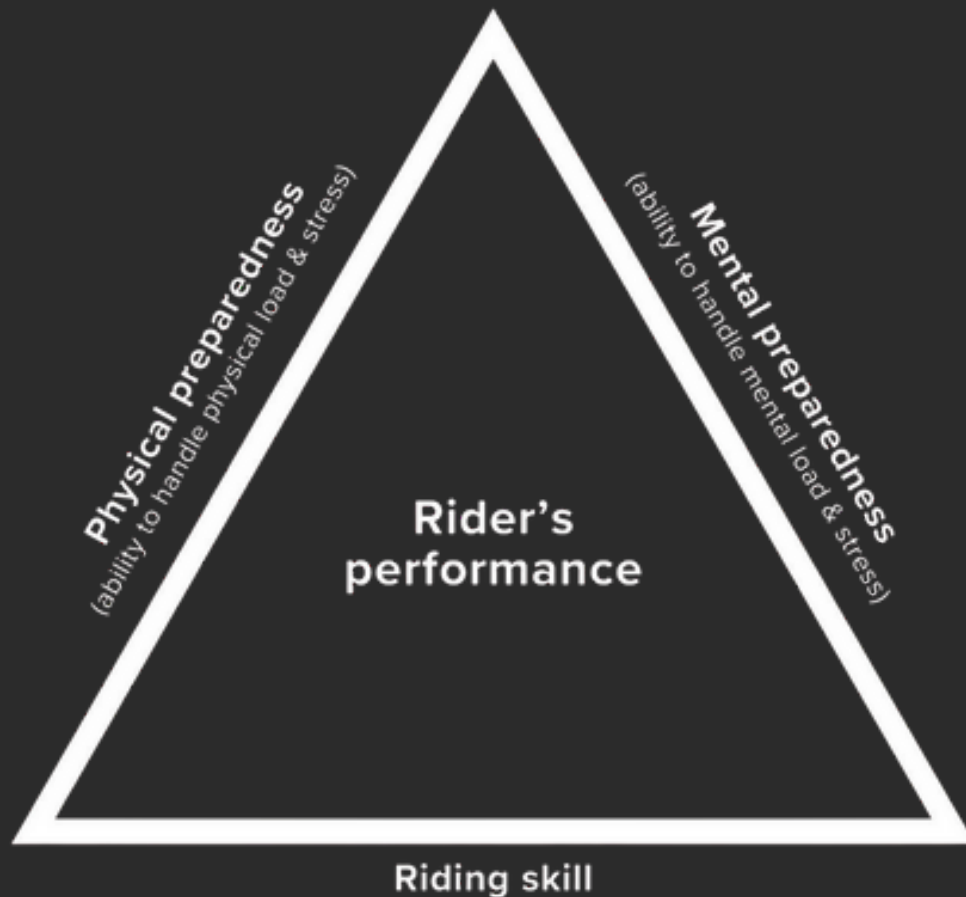
I hope you find this useful and if you need any personal help, I am always just one IG DM or email away and you can ask me anything anytime.

*Laura Ahti,
Founder of Equestrain*





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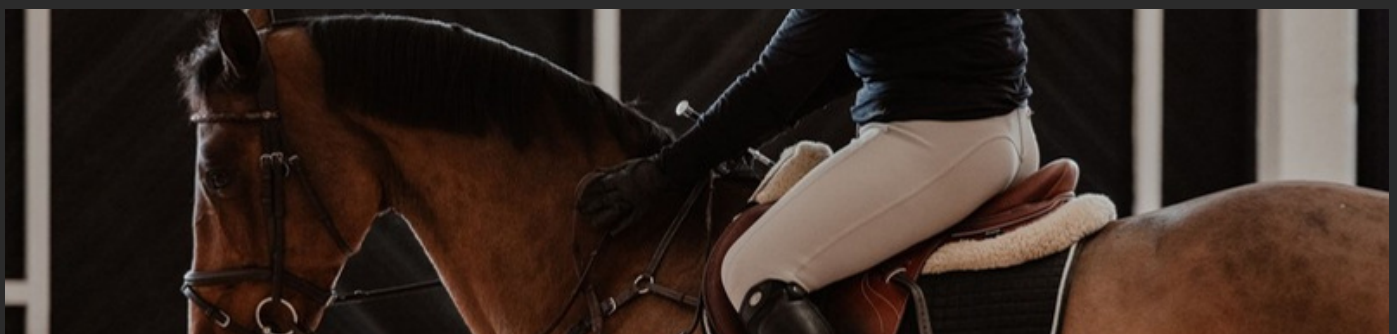
This is **Rider's Performance Triangle**.

The foundation for your performance as a rider is in your **riding skill**. In order to become a great rider, you need to get in high quality practice as much as possible. Nothing can ever replace that.

But the riding skill is supported by your **physical and mental preparedness** for the sport. And without those two, it would be just a flat line.

Also, if we don't pay attention to your physical and mental preparedness, you end up with flat triangle where your progress as a rider starts to slow down.

Being physically and mentally fit for the sport helps you to also ride at your best when it matters – for example at the competitions.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

RIDER'S PERFORMANCE

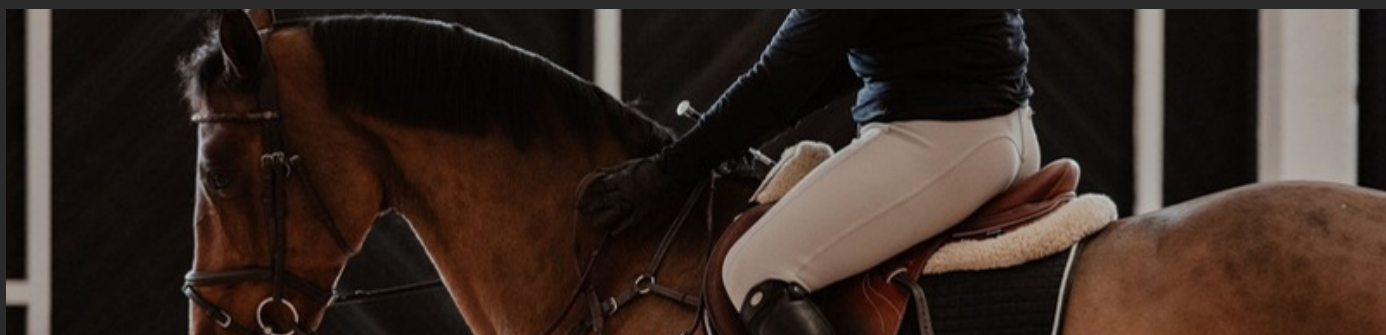
Competitive performance in equestrian sports depends not only on technical riding skills but also on **the rider's internal physical capacity (IRP)**, meaning the combination of aerobic capacity strength, mobility, balance, and postural control that allows a rider to perform efficiently in the sport.

Research shows that riding alone is not sufficient to fully develop these physical characteristics.

Studies show improving your aerobic and anaerobic capacity, strength and mobility through structured training enhances stamina, reaction speed, focus, and postural control allowing you to ride with precision and harmony.

Insufficient strength or asymmetry in rider's muscles can lead to instability, misalignment, and decreased communication with the horse.

Optimal joint mobility especially in the hips, ankles, and spine is essential for effective shock absorption, balance, and ability to follow horse's movements softly. Limited mobility restricts the rider's ability to follow the horse's motion, often causing stiffness, tension, and loss of rhythm.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

YOUR RIDING MATTERS

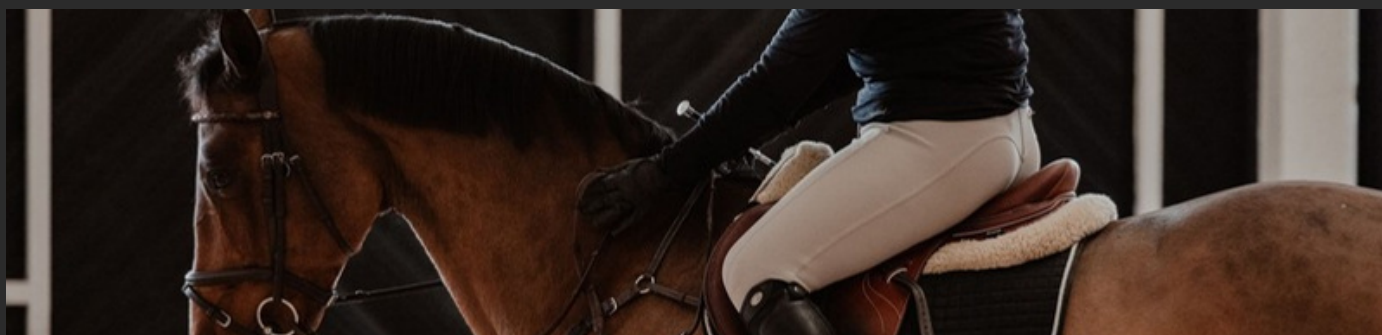
Not every rider feels the same, so why should your workouts be the same?

In the strength and mobility workouts we should choose the movements based on:

- How you feel with your riding at the moment? What you want to improve?
- What your trainer reminds you of?

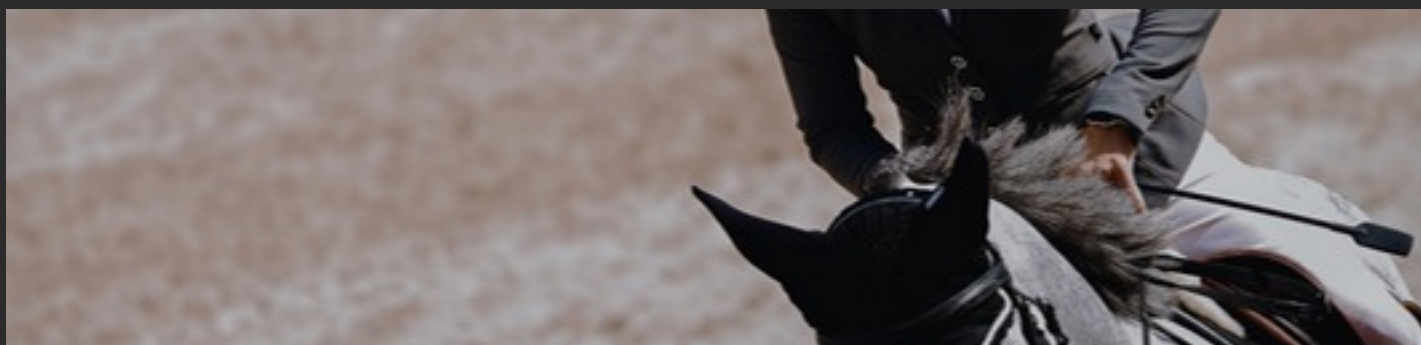
This allows us to build a real connection between your riding and your workouts because every seat asymmetry, crookedness and misalignment is there because of some compensation going on in your body.

And by choosing the movements into your workouts based on what your riding needs, we are able to make those seat & riding related challenges disappear for good.



20.10.-30.11. HELSINKI HORSE SHOW COMPETITION PREP GUIDE

WEEKS 1-6



This is what we call **foundations block**.

We start building the strong base for your performance as a rider. This means our main focus is on **aerobic capacity and mobility** with some maintenance strength work.

As this is also the first block, it's important to build a strong foundation also for the habit of doing your workouts. That's why we're not trying to do everything full gas from the gates.

In this block our most important goal is to get in our cardio work which has a huge role in your energy levels, recovery, focus, metabolism and it will also keep you sharp through the long competition days and weekend.

Cardio

- 2x/week
- 1x Basic conditioning / zone2 (45-60min)
- 1x Intervals at anaerobic threshold (30min)

Mobility

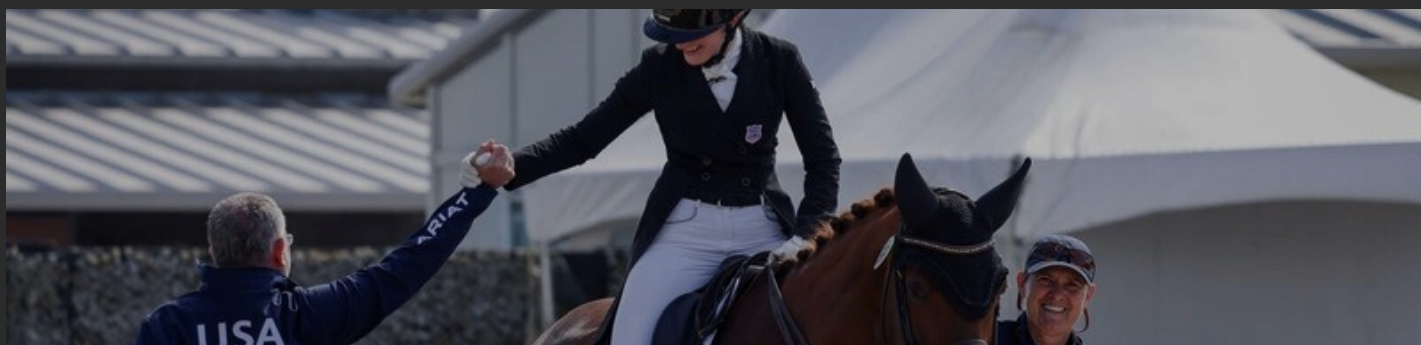
- 2x/week (15-20min)

Strength

- 1-2x/week either at home or at the gym
- If busy schedules, prefer short 20-30min home workouts
- Preferably tailored based on your riding

1.12.-11.1. HELSINKI HORSE SHOW COMPETITION PREP GUIDE

WEEKS 7-12



This is what we call **strength & conditioning block**.

We're at the most quiet period of the sport, so it allows us to put a little extra focus on our own performance before the beginning of the year and more structured and focused preparation for the HHHS with your horse.

See this block as the time **where the difference is being made**.

This is when we work on the seat and riding related challenges, tackling those root causes and building that physical confidence in ourselves.

We prioritize strength and cardio in this block to really make **feel physically fitter**.

Cardio

- 1-2x/week
- 1x Basic conditioning / zone2 (45-60min)
- 1x Intervals at anaerobic threshold (30min)

Mobility

- 1-2x/week based on how you feel

Strength

- 2-3x/week either at home or at the gym
- If busy schedules, prefer short 20-30min home workouts
- If at the gym, 2x works already very nicely
- Preferably tailored based on your riding

WEEKS 13-18



This is **the final performance block.**

As the preparation with your horse gets more intense and focused, we're dialing down a little on your own workout load to keep your body feeling sharp, good and you can focus on tuning your riding.

This block is meant to support building your confidence and trust in your own riding before the competition.

We focus on strength and mobility work and cut down the cardio to make more time into your week to focus on the more intense schedules that often come with the new year.

Cardio

- No mandatory cardio
- If you feel like it, short intervals are enough

Mobility

- 2-3x/week to make sure your body stays feeling good, especially if your riding hours go up again

Strength

- 2-3x/week either at home or at the gym
- If busy schedules, prefer short 20-30min home workouts
- If at the gym, 2x works already very nicely
- Preferably tailored based on your riding



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COMPETITION WEEK



This is **the week** you've been working for.

All we now need to do is to keep your body feeling good and sharp. On Monday and Tuesday try to get some light movement in to keep your body feeling sharp and connected.

The day before your competition focus on mobility.

On the competition day focus on your nutrition game, traffic light model and pre-ride routine. You've put in all the work already, now it's time to enjoy and take in every moment of the competition.

Monday

- Full body bodyweight or dumbbell workout to keep your body feeling sharp
- 20-30min

Tuesday

- Gentle active mobility / pilates type of workout or a 20-30min easy basic conditioning cardio

Day before

- Rest / 15-20min Mobility workout focusing on your hips and spine rotations



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HOW TO PLAN YOUR WORKOUTS?

<

What would make the biggest difference in your riding right now?

Consistency ☐

Flexibility ☐

Improving my seat ☐

Confidence ☒
I want to feel fitter, more energized and confident in myself and my riding.

Next

<

Let's focus on your plan.

Every rider feels it differently in the saddle. Which areas would you most like to improve right now? Choose 2.

Seat symmetry ☒
- Un-even shoulder line
- Weight more on one stirrup
- Side collapsing hip

Upper body posture ☐

Forward tilting hip ☐

I want to sit upright ☐

Better balance ☒
- Losing stirrups
- Tendency to look down on horse's neck
- Difficulty to keep heel in the right position

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< 20.10.-26.10. >

Mon 20	GYM Gym workout
Tue 21	MOBILITY 15min Hip mobility magic for long and relax...
Wed 22	CARDIO Cardio workout
Thu 23	
Fri 24	GYM Gym workout
Sat 25	MOBILITY 22min Relaxing stretch class
Sun 26	

Save -40% off your first month (click here)

If you want to trust that every workout is in your program to make you reach your goals, get -40% off from your first monthly payment with **code "HIHS26"**. Apply the code at the check out. Use the link above. Code works only when registered through that link.



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MINDSET

MENTAL FITNESS: AN UNSUNG HERO IN SHOWJUMPING

Henrik von Eckermann, carrying trust on his steed, King Edward, shed light on the critical role of mental fitness in a promising performance. Akin to physical fitness, mental well-being forms a basis for positive training outcomes and winning performances, as emphasized by von Eckermann.

“I also work on a mental level, in order to stay clear and focused, and not let the mistakes and failures touch me in a negative way.”

**Here's what Henrik von Eckrmann
and Peder Fredricson say**



To prevent your brain from getting foggy when it needs to be at its sharpest, make sure to create routines for every time you are at a show. By creating these habits, you save energy by having less to think about. Then you can focus more on what really matters. Peder for example, always jumps the same amount of jumps in the warm-up and always prepares the same way for each course walk. Consistency is key.

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MINDSET

Your physical and mental preparedness always go hand in hand and we can't really separate them.

When it comes to handling your competition nerves, being the grounded and calm partner for your horse who might get tense in the warm up or simply just enjoying the competition day and atmosphere without feeling like you want to throw up, we can use these simple mental tools to practice that skill.

Use the upcoming shows, training sessions and any other situations in life that might make you feel nervous or stressed as an opportunity to practice before the big competition day. Having a good mindset at the competitions takes repetition and practice.



The traffic light model

This my all time favorite tool to help riders with competition nerves.

3R -rule for focus

This simple framework helps you to keep your focus in the warm up, before entering the arena and to feel confident knowing you're ready to ride a great round.

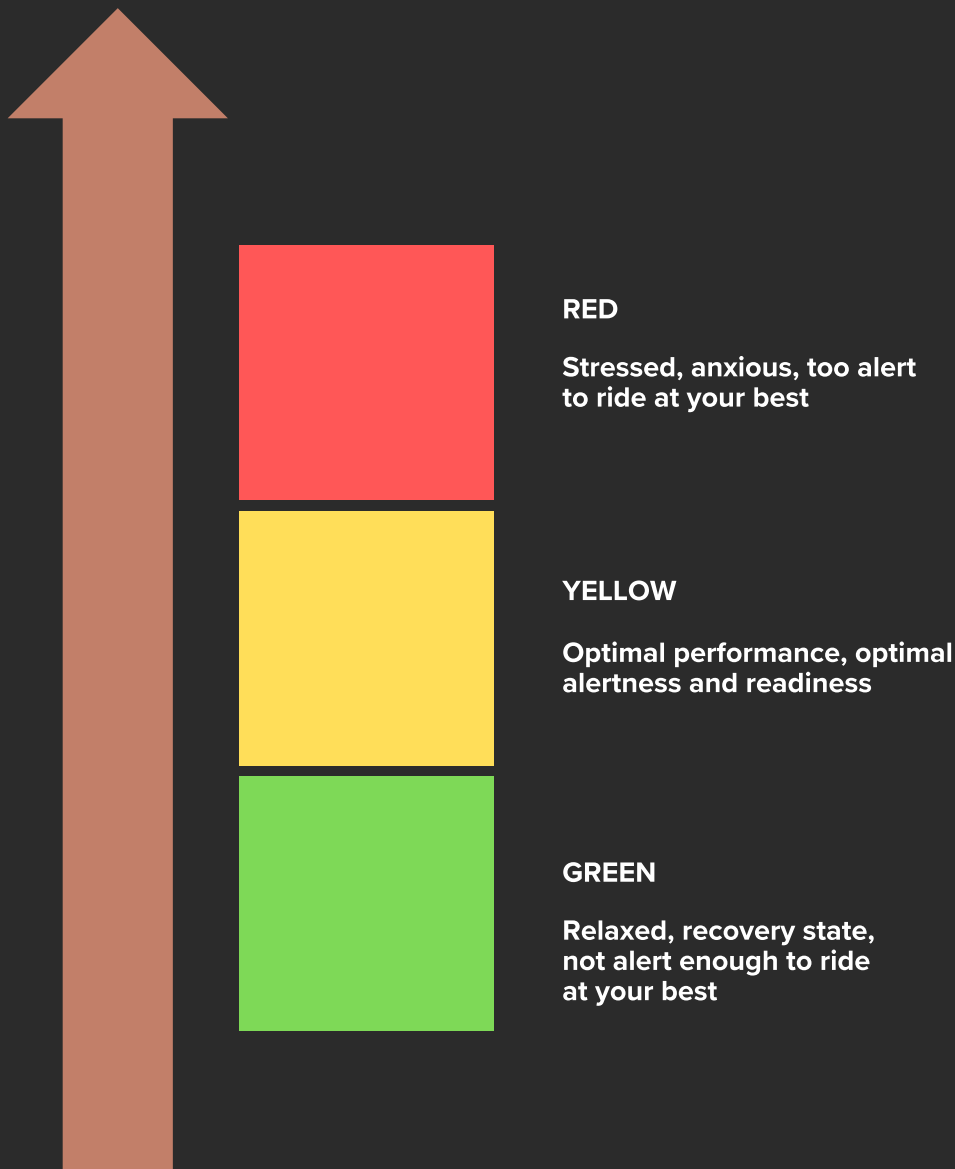


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TRAFFIC LIGHT MODEL

The traffic light model helps you to recognize the different levels of alertness and to find the tools that work for you in different states.

First, we need to clarify how you feel in different zones.



TASK no1

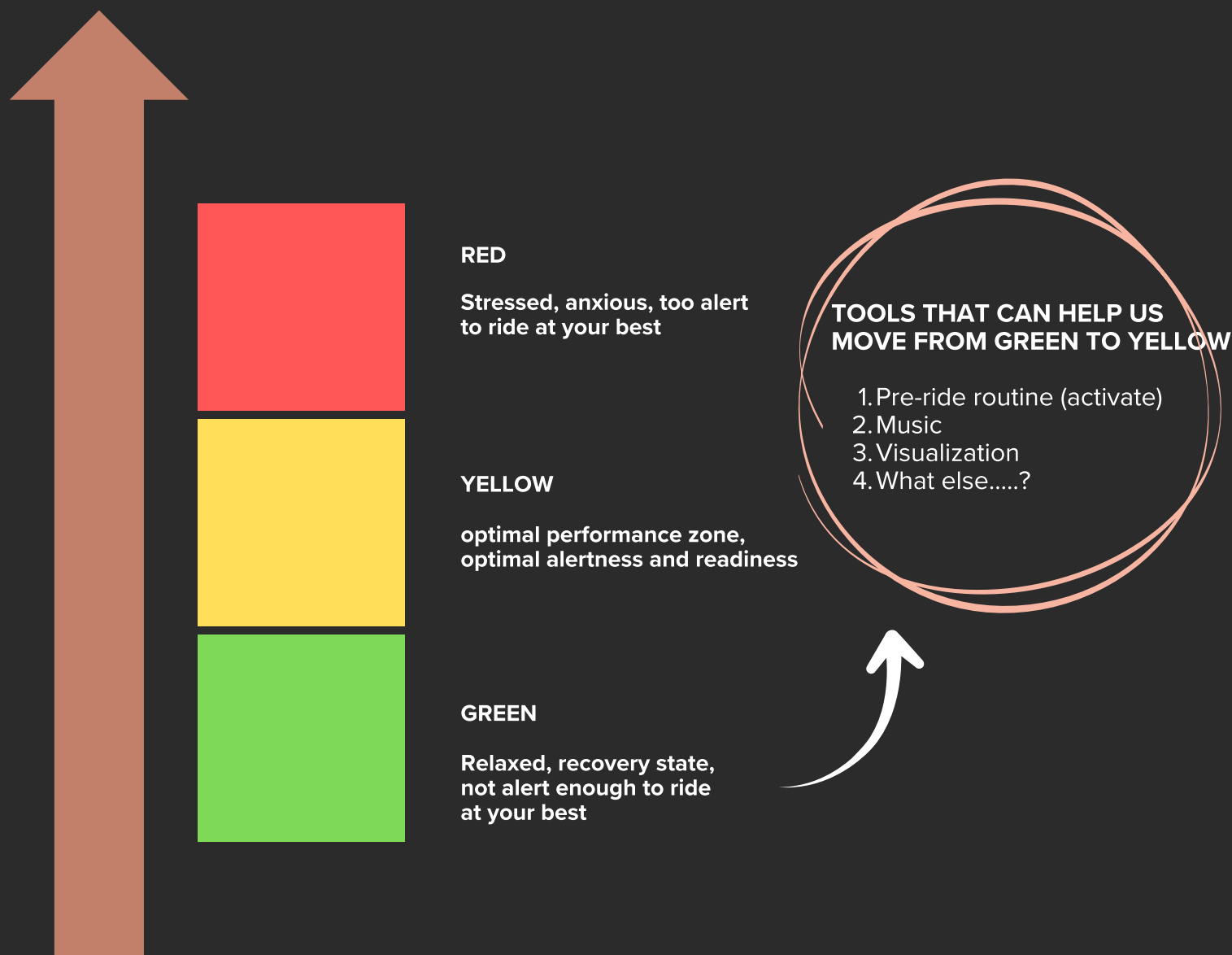
Write down how you typically feel when in different zones?

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TRAFFIC LIGHT MODEL

Next we need to identify actions and habits you can have to help you move **from green to yellow**. Here we typically use a short **pre-ride routine** paired with **a playlist** of your choice. This helps you to get physically ready, focused in this moment and to 'wake up' before entering the warm up ring with your horse. We end the pre-ride moment with **a course visualization**.

Write down a pre-ride routine that looks like you and feels good for you. Use the upcoming shows and training sessions to **start building this habit** and to make adjustments if needed.





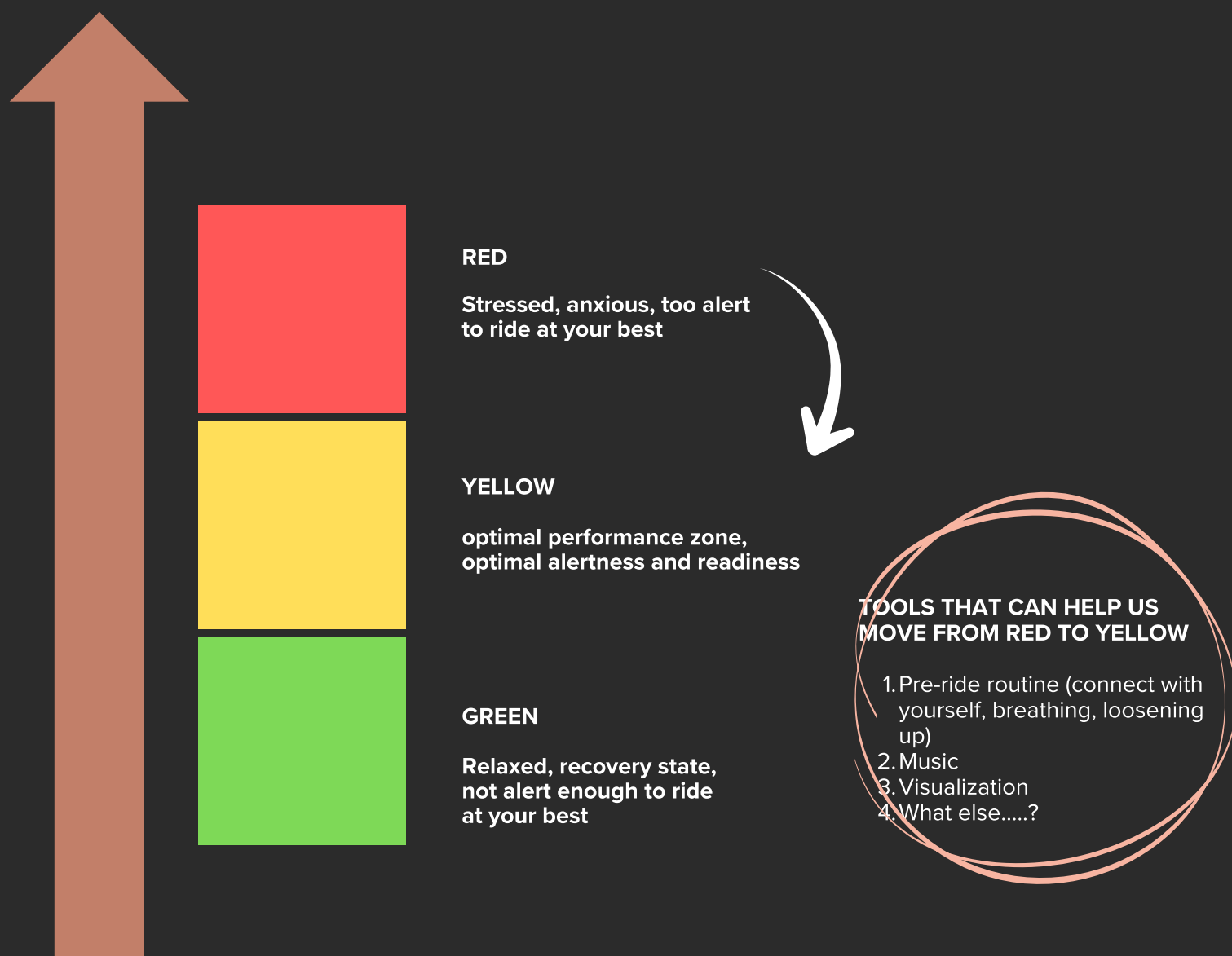
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TRAFFIC LIGHT MODEL

Next we need to identify actions and habits you can have to help you move from red to yellow. Here we typically use pre-ride routine and a playlist to help you come down from your head back into your body, this moment and to lose up the tension. Coming back to your breathing and connecting with your body helps you to reduce stress and nerves before the warm up ring. End the pre-ride moment with a course visualization.

Write down a pre-ride routine that looks like you and feels good for you when you feel you're in the red zone. Use the upcoming shows and training sessions to start building this habit and to make adjustments if needed.





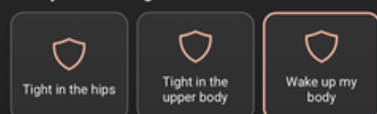
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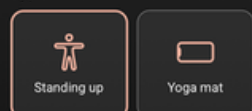
HOW TO PLAN YOUR PRE-RIDES?

Plan your pre-ride routine by picking one from each category

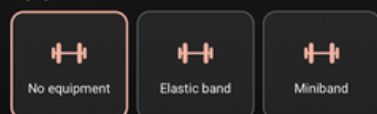
How you're feeling



Type

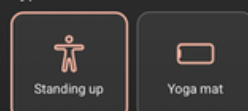


Equipment

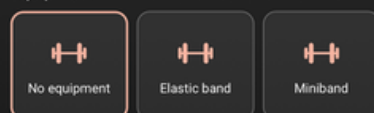


Show my pre-ride routine

Type

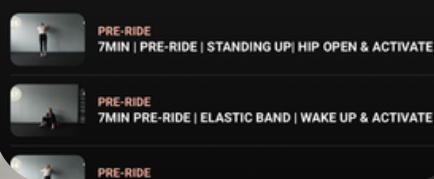


Equipment

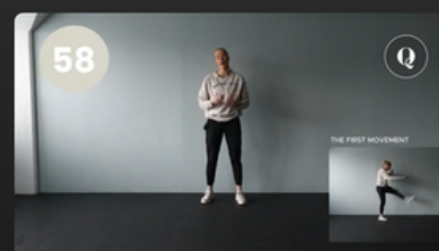


Show my pre-ride routine

My favorite pre-ride routines



Your pre-ride routine



PRE-RIDE

7min | Pre-ride | Standing up | Hip open & activate

This short standing up pre-ride routine focuses on helping you sit deeper in the saddle, closer to your horse and feeling balanced with your seat.

1 minute / movement 2 rounds of:

1. Leg swings
2. Cossack squat
3. Th-rotations

+ 3x1 Max effort vertical jumps

Mark completed

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3R RULE FOR FOCUS

This tool is what we use with riders during the warm up, the time before entering the ring and before the course – sometimes also during the course.

It's for **any moment where you feel you've lost your focus.**

The thing is: focus is always somewhere but we want it to be in this moment, in things that we can control. If we move to the yellow circle, we're focusing on things like other horses going crazy in the warm up and letting it affect our own calm and focused mode. Or if we're thinking about the mistake we did in the warm up or the pole we got on the first fence as we ride the course, we're in the past.

You can become better at feeling confident and focused in the competitions. All you need to do is practice.

REGISTER

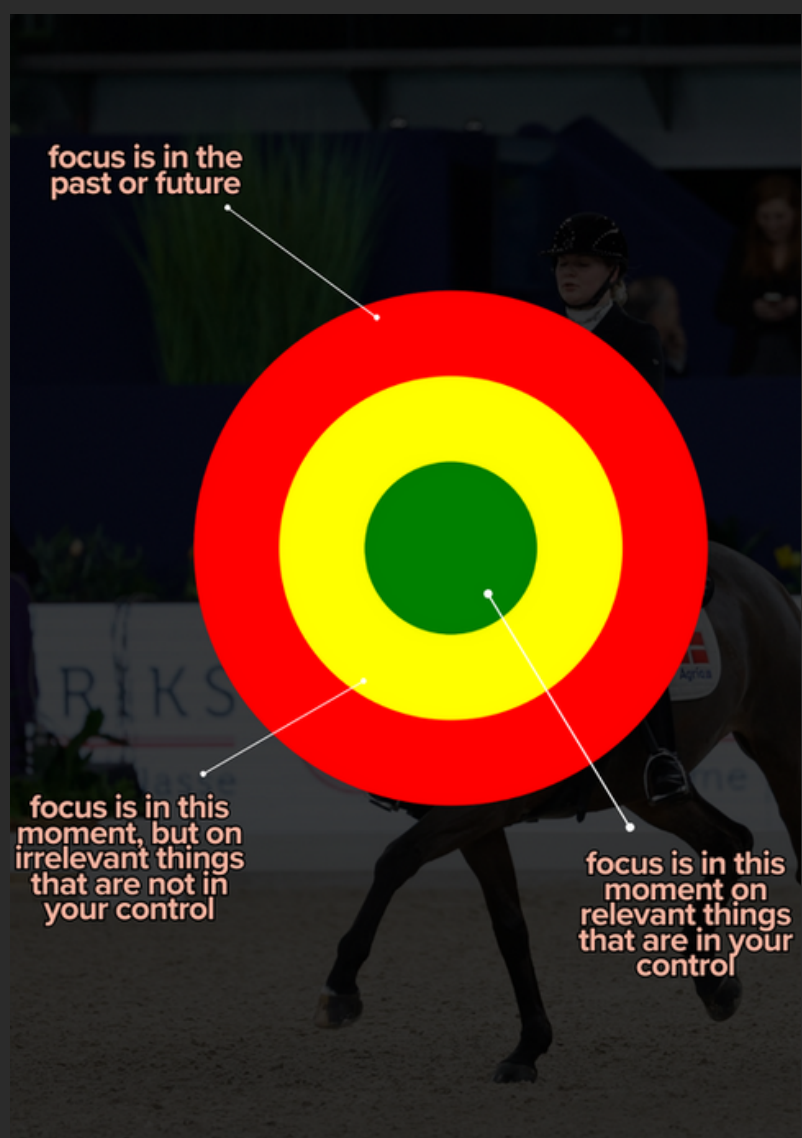
Register where your focus is in this moment.

RELEASE

If your focus was on irrelevant things or in the past/future, just let it go without judgement.

RE-FOCUS

Actively bring your mind back to this moment and where you'd want your focus to be. You can use a verbal cue like "next action" to help guide your mind.



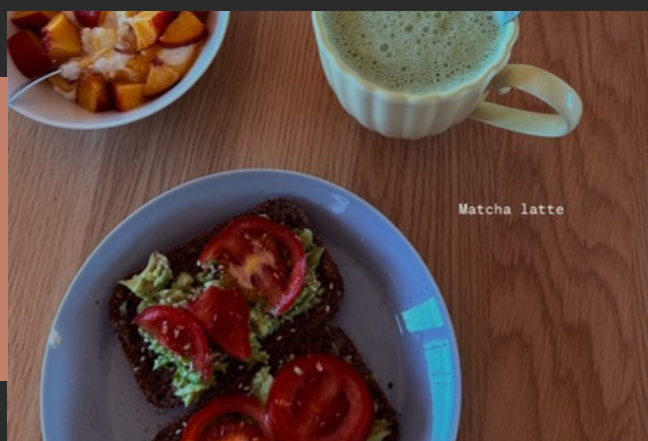
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NUTRITION

Your energy levels play a huge role in your performance, focus and on your recovery.

Not just during one day of competition, but over the entire weekend. Especially if your most important class is on Sunday afternoon, it's very important that we take care of your recovery through out the whole weekend.

We'll cover the basics of competition day nutrition and I offer some simple examples for meals and snacks. If you're interested Rider's nutrition masterclasses, recipes or meal guides, we've got those also available in the App.



"I don't feel like eating breakfast"

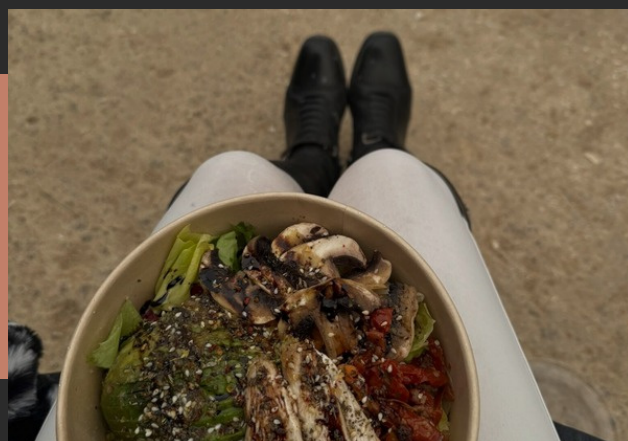
Sounds familiar? This happens because your cortisol (stress hormone) spikes up too early.

Take a short morning walk with an electrolyte bottle or do a 10-minute morning mobility. Often this helps to reset the body a little and rise your appetite.

Prepare for success

Often with riders I work with we don't trust that the competition venue has very great food options.

We often prep into a cooler what the rider knows they enjoy eating and to also save time and effort knowing we've got everything ready from snacks to meals and hydration.



COMPETITION DAY NUTRITION

Breakfast

Try your best to eat a big breakfast to get energy in early in the morning.

- Yoghurt bowl with granola, berries, nuts
- A breakfast wrap with fried eggs, cheese, some veggies
- Protein pancakes
- A nutritious, high protein smoothie

Snacks

Build a balanced snack by picking one from each category. Eat balanced snack 1h before your class. If needed, grab 1x Carbohydrate source 30min before class.

Protein

120g Skyr or other protein quark
120g Cottage cheese
1 Protein bar
20g Protein powder mixed with water

Carbohydrates

1-2 Bananas
Handful of dried fruits
3-4 Rice cakes with hummus
1-2 Rice cakes with chocolate topping
2 pieces of dark chocolate
Innocent etc grocery store smoothie
2 Baby food smoothie

Healthy fats

8-10 Nuts
½ Avocado with rice cakes

Main meal (3h before class)

If you wonder when to eat bigger meal, 3 hours before your class is the best timing. If not possible, play a strong snack game to keep your energy levels up & steady until a proper meal.

- Tortilla wraps
- Sweet potato, hummus & chicken/tofu/etc
- Rice, salad + protein source bowl

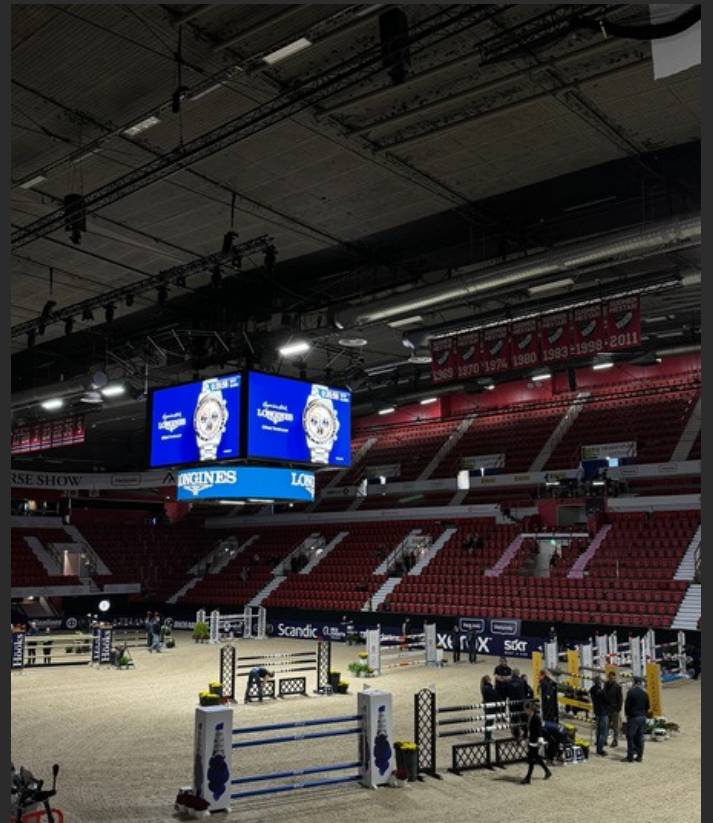
Remember to eat another proper meal in the evening to support recovery.

Hydration

Drink 0.5l electrolytes in the morning before possible coffee in your system.

Stop drinking 30-45min before your class to avoid excessive need to pee million times.

Aim to drink 2.5l water/electrolytes during the day.



HELSINKI HORSE SHOW COMPETITION PREP

Thank you

I hope this guide gives you at least one thing you find useful in your competition preparation and I hope you'll enjoy your time at Helsinki Horse Show !

xx Laura