

Scholarship Report by Megan Kapral

Thanks to Lendon Gray and D4K, I was able to meet my goal of successfully moving up to Prelim at the end of our 2009 show season. With the money I received from this scholarship, I worked with Wendy Schafer, an Olympic gold medalist in eventing from Australia, for about two weeks. I also attended a clinic with Betsy Steiner. I learned so much from both of them and was able to make a great improvement in my riding!

I've ridden with Wendy before, so she knows Ice and me well, and we were able to get right to work. Wendy was surprised at how much we had changed since she last saw us. Ice has made a tremendous improvement in the three years that I've had him, and especially over the past few months. While Wendy was here, we focused a lot on improving Ice's overall balance since he has always been one of those horses who just loves his forehand. After tweaking my position and convincing Ice that he really is supposed to work like this, it took some getting used to, but I was so excited with the outcome. Then, we were able to work with his flying changes since we've had a little trouble with getting them clean because his canter naturally isn't the best quality (although it has improved a lot and still is!). One exercise that really helped us fix his tendency to be late behind was canter half pass to the flying change. This worked particularly well for Ice because the half pass got him to really step under himself and improved the quality of the canter so that the flying change came so much easier, and correct! He really does have great, expressive changes; they just need a little work.

I also took a few jump lessons with Wendy, and we focused on getting Ice and me comfortable with jumping the prelim height and higher with confidence. So to do this we worked again on balance, and keeping a steady, powerful canter, and lots of gymnastics. We did exercises with poles to focus on developing a solid connection and regulating the length of stride while maintaining power. On top of the regular jump lessons, I also got the opportunity to stay over at Waerdaca for a two-day cross country schooling with Wendy. We jumped just about everything there,

right up through the Intermediate level! After my lessons with Wendy, I was so confident and definitely ready to go Prelim!

With the money I had left over, I attended a clinic with Betsy Steiner. I had a great time, she was wonderful to work with and I am looking forward to future clinics with her. I really got a lot out of my lesson. We worked on a lot of transitions within the gait, getting him really collected then being able to send the energy forward and still hold it together and vice-versa. We also worked on his canter half pass to the flying change and got quite a few on time and good quality changes. When I was done, Betsy told me that I should look in to doing the Young Riders Program, and asked if I had ridden Juniors; she was shocked to learn that I am primarily an eventer and told me that I should consider dressage because there's no doubt I'll make it to the top. That was definitely one of the best compliments I have received on my riding, and meant a lot coming from her. I would say it's right up there with being compared to Courtney King by Gary Rockwell in a previous clinic.

I remember when I first got Ice, he could hardly canter, every other stride he would try to yank the reins out of my hands, and his forehead was his favorite place. Now that we have met our goal for the year, he's successfully competing in Second level dressage and eventing at Prelim. We've worked hard to get where we are and I'm very

proud of our accomplishments. This achievement would not have been possible without your help! Thank you so much!

Megan Kapral

Photos on next page.





