

On July 10th and 11th I had the pleasure of working with Jacquie Brooks, a well known Canadian Olympian, for the first time at the beautiful Mistover Farm in Pawling, New York. At the start of my lesson, she told me it wouldn't be like any other I'd had and she was right. Jacquie is unlike any other instructor I've worked with and she has an uncanny way of making understandable analogies. My two favorites were "Pulling the cart" or the feeling of the horse being in front of your leg, and thinking of the horse as a fence with a post on each end and sitting in the weakest point of the fence.

In my first lesson, we worked on establishing where the three lines were, the midpoint or shoulder-hip-heel, the hand and girth, and the poll and bit. We first established this in the walk and halt, then once I had a good idea of what these lines felt like we introduced the cart analogy and moved to the trot work. Right away Jacquie noticed that my horse, Al, was behind my leg so she reminded me to pull the cart forward and evenly between my hand and leg. Instantly, Al was moving more forward and wasn't behind the vertical. Jacquie also had me utilize travers to collect the trot and move into the half pass. I rode the long diagonal and positioned Al into the travers, and this exercise produced a shoulder leading, correctly bent half pass, rather than a forehand heavy, haunches leading half pass. In the canter work, the main focus was the timing of the flying change sequences. Jacquie asked me to pay more attention to the landing of the inside front leg rather than count; when I pointed my attention to the inside leg the flying changes were on my aid and clean.

The next day we reiterated the ideas of my first ride and introduced new ones such as thinking of the horse as a stick horse, in order for the front end to come up the back end must go down. We spent time working in the piaffe and passage; Jacquie asked me to pull my elbows back without affecting the position of his head and neck and move him forward without pushing him out of the passage. In the piaffe, we used the halt and rein back to quietly ask for the proper balance that is required before asking in the trot. When we moved to the canter work the main goal was to raise the poll and have more weight carried behind. Jacquie had me use walk pirouettes to gain more control over the shoulders and to keep Al more forward thinking, when we moved up into the canter pirouettes I found that I had much more control and adjustability within the pirouette. To finish up my ride with Jacquie we worked on the one time tempi changes. This was my first time purposely asking for the ones, so Jacquie had me on the wall tracking right, she asked me to only do one change so I could maintain the quality of the canter and produce a clean uphill change. At first it was really difficult to find the right timing and placement of my leg but I eventually got the hang of it. It was a really cool experience to get a good quality one tempi when I asked.

Overall, I learned so much in two short days and am beyond excited to utilize the tools Jacquie gave me. I have felt such an improvement in Al's gaits and attitude and in

my own riding. I am so thankful to D4K not only for granting me a scholarship to ride under Jacquie but for providing a pipeline for young riders like me, I wouldn't be the rider I am today without D4K and Lendon. I hope to have the chance to lesson with Jacquie again soon.