

I have been so lucky to have Dressage4Kids in my life! I started going to clinics with my pony several years ago and eventually was honored to get a D4K donated horse in the midst of Covid lockdowns. Our first year together was tricky as we navigated her first shows and travel to the National Championships where she competed in FEI Children's while my pony was in FEI Pony division. She had never shown, was tricky to shoe and trailer, but we knew she was a lovely horse that needed time. I was so happy to meet Estremadura MVH or Z.



The first season we went to Florida and participated in the USEF Youth Clinic and we were assigned to Sabine Schut-Kery. She was so much fun to work with and she was still preparing before the Olympic selections were made. It was so exciting to then watch her progress at Tokyo and then see her again at Lamplight for Festival of Champions at the autograph session. I made her a crystal necklace and got my t-shirt autographed as well. Then I asked if she could possibly be able to help us again in Florida and she agreed!

I knew we would be attending the Youth Clinic as part of winning Reserve Champion in Ponies. I was immediately saving and planning for the lessons with Sabine that would immediately follow the clinic where I rode with the amazing Olivia Lagoy-Weltz. My mare is still very green with the Festival being only her 3rd show. I hoped to finish the week with a 3rd level test at Global. It wasn't going to be easy. It was a long 2 weeks of training with 3 lessons and a ride a test the first week and 4 lessons with Sabine ending with one show day. USEF, The Dressage Foundation and Dressage4kids sponsor the Youth Clinic as well. So many thanks for their contributions to our sport!

This was our second time getting to ride at Poinciana Farm. Z was not as settled trailering in and out for our lessons though I must admit this year she didn't almost take out Scott Hassler on the hacking path while backing away from the arena. So technically there was improvement! Poinciana Farm is a beautiful space with plenty of room but lots for Z to absorb. She stood in the cross ties, traveled everywhere alone(no more emotional support pony) and loaded every day without issue from Global where we stabled to Poinciana where we took lessons. We made a ton of progress but still working to be the same horse each day and in new places.

Sabine is incredibly detail oriented and helps me get the basics stronger. It's always about the basics! When Z isn't concentrating because we are in a new environment it is tough to get her focus and lower her head and neck. She is built very uphill and getting access to her swinging back was the goal. We spent a lot of time working to just get the relaxation and rhythm needed. The first day I was a bit out of sorts, I had my Covid booster as soon as it became available to me. I don't think I was quite riding my best but we still got her focus back before the ride ended.

The second and third days we continued toward the better contact and reaching out and down. During one surprise pop up shower Sabine brought her Olympic horse, Sanceo, right into the covered arena during my lesson to get out of the storm. I was very excited to see him but Z remained focused and we continued circling and passing him as we made half passes. It tested Z to change arenas, join the stallion, and be amid the other riders as the rain came but she did it!



On our final lesson day Sabine advised to get to places early when we compete and spend loads of time walking and relaxing her and working to become the same horse in a new environment. She will learn to trust the rider and be able to perform at her best in a timely way. She needs to understand what I expect of her is the same no matter where we are. For me she told me to watch the greats and take time to really study the riding of the classical masters. Watch the intricacies of their rides and learn from them everything I can, take notes, and think

about it during my own riding.



We were able to show our 3rd level test at Global at the end of the week. Unfortunately another epic FL storm popped up and all classes were moved up so we did not get to do the homework assignment to walk for a long time nor did we get our full warmup. But despite the wind whipping Z stayed pretty focused! She had a little jig in the walk and one exuberant change and

those were coefficients but we successfully competed at 3rd level and it was the first time for both of us and our first time showing in Wellington. We earned a score for regionals too!



I am so thankful to be able to spend time with Sabine for a second time with the generous scholarship received from Dressage4Kids. My riding has grown so much from the assistance provided by Lendon Gray, D4K, and my incredible horse!

Maren Elise Fouché Hanson