

Marley McCourt

### Dressage4Kids Horsemastership Clinic 2024

June 24th through June 27th was the Dressage4Kids Horsemastership Clinic with Olympians Ali Brock, and Lendon Gray held at Hilltop Farm in Colora Maryland. In this clinic, there are ten riders chosen to participate and receive an abundance of knowledge. I participated in the Dressage4Kids Horsemastership Clinic in 2022 at Riveredge with a chestnut pony that I was competing in the FEI Pony division. This year, I brought my FEI Junior horse, Hide D4K, to help improve some things before attending the North American Youth Championships (NAYC) in late July.

With about a month before having to leave for NAYC, I know that there is not much time to dive in and fix something extraordinary completely. Still, my goal for this clinic was just to improve the overall impression, help fix the little mistakes we have in the ring going into our half passes, and to improve the consistency of the overall balance throughout all movements.

On Monday we spent the afternoon getting all the horses settled into Hilltop, where they will stay for the next week. Hilltop is such a beautiful facility with such wonderful staff that keeps everything tidy. Opening remarks started at 6 pm in the lounge at Hilltop with Lendon Gray and Mary Livernois giving us a rundown of how the week was going to go and we were also given beautiful D4K pins and saddle pads.

Tuesday morning started nice and early with the first ride of the day starting at 7:30 AM in the indoor. As I stated earlier, I had ridden in a



previous D4K Horsemastership Clinic before with Ali Brock on a pony, but this was my first time working with her on my current horse,

Hide D4K. I was fairly nervous going into this lesson, purely because I didn't know what to expect. I knew that I loved working with Ali in the past, but I had no clue what her thoughts were going to be of Hide and I.

In just the first lesson with Ali on Tuesday, there was already a huge difference. She was able to be very picky about my position in the saddle. I have always struggled with my posture in the saddle and with my seat which then leads to Hide and I having miscommunications during our tests. Ali had me working on stretching up tall in the saddle, tucking my seat under, and lifting my chin. In the sitting trot, I loved how she was able to explain the motion of the pubic



bone moving up and down to follow the motion of the horse.

Wednesday there was already a huge improvement in how I felt in the saddle. I felt more stable in my seat and position, and that I was able to follow the movement of my horse's gaits better. It was extremely comforting to hear Ali Brock encourage me by saying that he has the quality and capability to take me up through the U25 Grand Prix, which is my goal.

(Picture Credit: Mary Livernois)

On Thursday, Hide was starting to feel a bit tired from all of the hard work that he had been putting in the previous two days with Ali Brock. There was a significant change in my riding from just the two days, and she had given me plenty of homework that had later on helped me tremendously competing at NAYC. Thursday was a lesson with Lendon Gray, keeping things fairly simple, we worked on the canter choreography that I have in my musical freestyle. In my

freestyle, I have a counter-canter serpentine with flying changes to counter canter. Lendon was able to help me ask for more expression in the changes on the serpentine line, along with keeping the balance in the counter canter.

I am so grateful to have received the Lendon Gray Scholarship to be able to attend this clinic! This is a clinic that has always been close to my heart and I learn so much from it as a rider and as an auditor! I highly recommend auditing this clinic and the lectures that come with it because the level of knowledge I have received from observing everything is priceless. The knowledge that Ali Brock and Lendon Gray shared with me this week is something that I heavily incorporate into my daily rides and has resulted in an incredible amount of improvement in not only my position and balance but also my horse's balance!



(PC: Mary Livernois)



Pictured is Hide D4K and I at NAYC this summer after the 2024 Dressage4Kids  
Horsemastership Clinic! Pc: Jason Rowe