

Lendon Gray Scholarship Report 2010

Coaching for the 2010 NAJYRC By: Taylor Noonan

I received the Lendon Gray Scholarship to offset the costs of having my coach, Tanya Rennie, with me in Lexington, KY for the 2010 North American Junior Young Rider Championships. I was competing for the Region 8 Junior Team with my 13 year old Swedish Warmblood mare Magical (aka Maggie). Tanya Rennie is an FEI rider who is both my coach and Maggie's trainer. My goal heading to Kentucky was to help anchor the team to a medal and to place in the top ten as an individual.

Tanya came down the day before my team test and she helped us school in the main stadium where we would be showing. I had a very good loosening ride the day before and Maggie felt good in the warm-up. Tanya had us start to work the lateral work with some changes within the gaits. We moved on to some half pass to flying change exercises and mediums/extensions in both trot and canter. With Maggie it is very important to establish a clear, effective half-halt the day before a test, especially in the mediums and extensions, because she will try and take over immediately the day of the test. We had to end the schooling session early because our time ended in the main stadium and we made the decision to save as much energy as possible for my test the next day.

The next day I was to ride later in the day because I had the highest average on the Region 8 team. Tanya and I started the warm-up with the usual stretching long and low with transitions within the gait and in between gaits. Maggie felt okay but she did not feel as energetic and hot as she usually does. We continued to warm-up but as we picked the reins up she was getting much heavier in the bridle which is very unusual for her, especially in the double bridle. Tanya really helped keep me calm and collected as we tried to work on different ways to keep her up and using her back and hindquarters. I started the test with a few very good movements but as the test went on I could feel Maggie losing more and more energy. After the walk tour I really did not have the horse I am used to showing at all.

After talking about Maggie's very unusual behavior in the test we decided to have her checked out by a vet. After a long examination we determined she was suffering from dehydration due to the long trip down and very hot weather. We spent the day in between our team test and individual test treating her and trying to get her back up to her normal self. We spent a lot of time talking with the vets about whether we should continue competing. They told us as long as she responded well to the fluids that we could continue. After an easy schooling ride, we decided she was feeling much better and we decided to go ahead with our individual test ride.

Tanya and I warmed her up as usual again, using a lot of leg to get her hind end really using a lot of pushing power. She was much more up and energetic than my last test. Tanya is so important to my show experience because she really pushes me beyond what I think is good to a feeling I would never have asked for. We had a much better test than two days before and we were only about two places out of the freestyle.

Although the trip ended not being what I had hoped, we are always going to have bad shows and mine just happened to be my biggest one of the year. Having Tanya there really helped me get the best tests out of the horse I had and it also really helped us make the best decisions for Maggie's health. It was good to have another person there that knows my horse just as well as I do and to have her confirm what I was feeling. It was a very good learning experience that everyone will have someday in their showing career. The only disappointment I have is that I could not help the team get the medal I know we deserved. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to bring my coach to one of the most important competitions of my career!