

Phoebe McNeely
Dressage4Kids TEAM Clinic
Georgia International Horse Park
April 20/21, 2019

Last weekend I was lucky enough to attend my fifth Dressage4Kids TEAM Clinic with Lendon Gray. Over the off season I worked towards my goal of showing Second Level this season, so during my lessons with Lendon we mainly focused on tuning up my Second Level work.



On Saturday Lendon helped me focus on maintaining power and impulsion through my lateral work, especially in Shoulder-in and Haunches-in. Lendon also encouraged me to think about keeping a stretching feel through the shoulder-in to make sure that my horse was properly working over her back and pushing from behind. She also emphasized the importance of removing the weight of the rider during the training part of the ride by adding in posting trot to refresh the trot, improve engagement, and help create swing in the horse's back.



On Sunday my lesson was mainly focused on improving my walk-canter, canter-walk transitions. This was mainly to help me relax before an upwards transition and during the downwards transition. Lendon helped me to recognize how I often over prepare for the upwards transition and cause issues with the relaxation for my horse and over stiffen in my arms during the downwards transitions with inhibited

the fluidity of the downwards transitions. In an effort to help this, Lendon wouldn't give me a whole lot of notice before asking for the canter transition. By doing this it enabled me to not over

prepare and not become hyper focused on making a good transition. We also worked up letting the canter out and then collecting the canter on both straight and bending lines so that when I made the downwards transition I had a better feel for collecting the canter before asking for the walk.

One of the focal points of both of my lessons was helping to create throughness, suppleness, and fluidity throughout each movement. To help improve these things Lendon suggested that I work on Canter-trot-canter transitions, lengthen canter-shorter canter-lengthen canter transitions with differing rein length to test the horse's ability to stretch over the back into a longer rein or "squish" into a shorter rein. These transitions helped to improve the my horse's hind end engagement, lighten the forehand, and in general create a more uphill balance with more of a jump to the canter.



The other thing that we utilized over both lessons was leg yields. I learned in both lessons how useful leg yields are to help improve the suppleness in the horse's back and the fluidity of movement for the horse. On Saturday we mainly used short, shallow leg yields as a method to improve the quality of trot during lateral movement. By encouraging a forward sideways movement during a lateral movement my horse was already familiar with and fairly good at, it allowed me to transfer the same idea into Shoulder-in and Haunches-in. On Sunday we used longer, steeper leg yields (leg yielding across a diagonal ie: from K to M and H to F), Once I could do that with relative ease (they still weren't perfect), Lendon had me switch to a longer, super shallow leg yield (ie from M to D and from F to G). By doing this it forced me to think about controlling every step of the leg yield and to develop the same stretch from Saturday while keeping a fluid sideways movement without many bobbles.