

The SIT Program

This August I got the opportunity to participate in the month long Summer Intensive Training Program with Lendon Gray. This would not have been made possible without a very generous scholarship through Dressage4Kids.

Going into the SIT program my horse Val and I were competing FEI Juniors. We had schooled the PSG once or twice but the sequences of tempi changes were always a mental block for me. One day in my lesson Lendon had me just jump right into a line of changes and they felt awful. As I started to get upset she pulled me aside and started to tell me what a wonderful job I have done with my horse and how she couldn't believe he even got to this point we are at now.

If anyone knows Val, he's an eighteen year old Arabian/Saddlebred cross with a "back shaped like a banana" as Lendon puts it. He is a very difficult horse and it's safe to say he's conformationally challenged. Our next lesson we got to the bottom of my changes issue. I was riding the change but not the canter. We all know how incredibly important it is to bring the quality of the gait into the movements. As soon as I started doing that, they improved immensely! That was one my favorite "aha" moments.

Lendon wasn't the only one teaching us either, We had a few guest trainers come in too! Liz Austin and Hope Cooper generously donated their time to teach us. It's so great to get another perspective from other very well accomplished trainers and see their input, then put it all together with what Lendon says the next ride. It all really comes together.

In addition, we also had a phenomenal fitness program to keep us in the best shape we can be. I never really realized how important it is to be extra fit so us and our horses can

perform to the best of our abilities. After all we are athletes too. Angie Morin was our amazing fitness coach and really pushed us to our limits and made fitness feel rewarding! We had a combination of HIIT, Core, Balance, Yoga, Stretching, Bootcamp, and Meditation.

Another one of my favorite parts was our daily lecture. Everyday we had someone different to talk to us about a topic. Some horse related, some not. One of my personal favorites was from Jennifer Mitchel on rider physical therapy- she also worked with each rider and horse combo to help us be the best we can be! We also had some others on topics like saddle fit, nutrition, acupuncture, public speaking, business, the CDI jog, para equestrian, and even the equine digestive system.

Overall the SIT program really impacted my life and changed me in so many ways, as a rider and person. I've met so many lifelong friends who I bet I will be in touch with in years to come. It even changed the way I clean my tack and groom my horse! I am so incredibly thankful I got this life changing opportunity and It was all made possible by Dressage4Kids.