

Day two of the 3rd annual Robert Dover Horsemanship Clinic started out with our workout with Bob Gutowitz where we worked on strength training to help tone and develop the muscles. Then we went straight into the rides with Robert Dover and Jan Ebeling. Today Robert Dover really emphasized the use of the half halt and how every corner is an opportunity to half halt and engage the hindquarters, then the reward comes when you go out of the corner. With one rider, they practiced the centerline many times to make it as accurate as it could be because the centerline is where you greet the judge. He again, reminded each rider that within collection there should be the feeling that you could extend at any moment and vice versa. Jan Ebeling, who is an Olympic rider and coach, worked on transitions within the gait and from gait to gait with each rider. During the warm up he made sure that each rider started out long and low to make sure that the horses don't start out tense. Later on, saddle fitter Charlie Tota took the time to talk to us about the correct way to fit a saddle. He talked about the three basic aspects we should look for to affirm that your saddle is safe. The condition of the stirrup bars, stirrup leathers and the billets need to be in a good state such as stirrup bars staying attached to the saddle and the thread of the billets intact. We also discussed the different types of saddletrees and the position it needs to sit on the horse's back. The saddle could restrict the shoulder movement if you are not able to comfortably fit your hand in between the horse's shoulder and the saddle. We then traveled to gorgeous Stillpoint Farms, which Tuny Page generously let us use for a presentation by Dr. Jenny Susser. She is a Sports Psychologist who talked to us about ways to establish emotional fitness by creating rituals to keep you on task. Improving emotional fitness will help to improve the state and mind in which we ride in. For example, gaining patience, increasing focus, or handling stress is rituals we need to practice in order to improve our mental fitness. The day was filled with great instruction and presentations in which we all benefited from greatly!

-Allison Hopkins

Today was the second day of the clinic. The day started much the same, with morning stables to take care of the horses for the morning, then 7AM workout with Bob in the arena. We were all a bit sore from yesterday, so the frog jumps, one legged jumps, running forward and backward and back-to-back squats all felt harder than the workout yesterday. It was really rewarding though; when we ended with planks in the sand, I was already feeling stronger (even though I very likely am not any stronger, but these tough workouts give you a real sense of confidence!). Then it was off to the barns to get ready for the lessons.

The instructors today were Robert Dover and Jan Ebeling. I had my clinic with Robert Dover. It was amazing! He is a really great instructor and was really able to apply the theory that he taught us yesterday to a lesson. Some highlights from the ride:

- During the theory lesson, he told us to make sure you can "feel the extended in the collected move". While this made sense on paper, it is totally different when you are riding. To accomplish the correct half-halt, he had me (and everyone

- else for that matter) do what he called the "rubber band exercise". This was done on a circle, where one side of the circle was ridden in the extended gait and one side of the circle you asked for collection for three strides. When asking for the collection, Robert said I needed to use my leg and my seat as if I was asking for the extended canter, then close my fist to transfer the energy into collection rather than extension. In this way, the collection is adding power rather than subtracting, and as Robert said, you can "feel the extended gait in the collected gait". We worked this exercise in all three gaits.
- When giving a half-halt, the horse should bend the joints more, become more active, and step straight under behind. At one point, Sunny tried to swing his haunches to the right instead of stepping straight under when I gave a half-halt. Robert identified this as an evasion to bending the joints and sitting more behind.
 - Robert emphasized using the "mind's eye" to visualize a move as you ask for it. When going into an extended trot, he would tell me to visualize the grandest version of that movement, like imagining that it was Totilas or Valegro going into that move, and then ride it that way.
 - As with my lesson with Shelly yesterday, Robert enforced effective use of the corners.

After lunch, we had a very educational lecture about saddle fitting with Charlie Tota. He gave us some great insight to what we should check for our saddles for safety and some basic fitting tips. Charlie told us the three things to always check for safety reasons are the stirrup bar, the stirrup leathers, and the billets. If any of these things are damaged, it could be harmful to the rider if they were to fully break while riding. As for saddle fitting, there were several basic things he told us to look for when fitting the horse. For one thing, the length of the saddle should be appropriate to the length of the horse's back. It should not extend beyond the point where the last rib and the cowlick near the horse's haunch meet. This is because the last supported vertebrae is at this point, and if it sits beyond that it can put pressure on the loose vertebrae and make it impossible for the horse to step under behind. The second thing to check is the width of the channel in front. When the horse moves, its shoulder blade rotates back under the saddle. Therefore, it is important that the saddle gives enough width for the shoulder to rotate. You should be able to fit your hand between the saddle and the shoulder. Finally, it is important that the saddle is not "bridging". This means that there is contact in the front and the back of the saddle but a tunnel in the middle where it is not touching the horse's back. This is important because if it is bridging in the middle, it is putting more pressure on the front and the back of the saddle, which can cause the horse sore pressure points.

Then, it was off to Tuny Page's amazing Stillpoint Farm (an absolutely stunning facility!) for a lecture with sport's psychologist Dr. Jenny Susser. During this hour, we talked about emotional fitness, how to improve our emotional fitness, and how this can affect our performance as riders. The key to emotional fitness is the same as physical fitness: go out and practice it. Rituals do this. She had us each identify some emotion that we would like to improve. Because we were talking about things that

we wanted to IMPROVE, these emotions were supposed to be positive things. For mine, I picked patience and motivation (more referring to schoolwork on this one than riding!). Then we talked about how, like muscles, emotional strength is built by stress, consistency, and repetition. As we practice being in these situations that we would normally respond to with stress or lack of motivation or whatever, and respond with them in a more favorable way, we make coverings of the myelin sheath in nerve cells that makes the nerve impulse stronger (which is a fancy science way of saying that the more we practice these qualities, the more second-nature they become). Jenny said that true learning only happens by the correction of a mistake, so it is okay if you are not always able to control your emotions exactly as you wish. It is important, however, to learn from your mistakes and continue to try to build your emotional fitness. The ability to control our emotions with undoubtedly benefit every competitor in the show ring to perform at their highest ability, and to handle the situation with grace if everything does not go perfectly. She also talked about the importance of visualization, which should be done often and well in advance of a competition to imagine how you will ride your test. Just as repetition of good emotional habits makes these reactions second nature, visualizing how you want to ride helps these things become second nature as well.

After finishing up taking care of the horses for the night, we finished the day with a "rider and auditor bonding" session at a yummy Italian restaurant. It was great to talk to everyone about the clinic, horses, and things other than horses outside the barn. It is also really great to get to know riders from all over the country in a non-competition situation. This is such an amazing opportunity to ride with some of the best trainers in the country and meet other riders with similar goals and riding experiences. I am so thankful; it is definitely the experience of a lifetime. -Jamie Pestana

On the second day of the clinic, participants once again came to the barn bright and early. After completing chores, the workout began. Today everyone felt the effects from yesterday's workout and most of us were very sore. We did a great deal of running and everyone's favorite exercise, frog jumps. After the workout, riders and auditors braved the cold and lessons began. Today's clinicians were Robert Dover and Jan Ebeling. I rode with Jan Ebeling. I had a great ride that used a great deal of various transitions to create balance and collection. We started the ride by doing very subtle transitions in the posting trot while Valencio was stretching. These transitions were only a few strides slightly forward and then I would back off for a few strides. This had him thinking about my aids and would set the groundwork for more defined transitions to come. As the ride progressed we started to more transitions that involved a greater deal of collection in both the trot and canter. We started with the transitions only on the circle but then moved them to a shoulder in. Jan worked with us the ability to do trot and canter transitions while in the shoulder in. The trot and canter transitions by themselves help loosen the horse's back and in this exercise helped us gain balance and harmony. At first when I would have a downward transition to the trot, Valencio would get a little stuck. Jan told me to make sure that i keep my legs on in the transition and think of going forward into

the downward transition so I do not lose any energy. He said the opposite about doing an upward transition. In an upward transition you should think about collecting right before you do the transition to keep the balance into the gait. We did not drill exercises but worked on transitions in various ways so that when Jan asked me to do a movement, the balance was there in such a way I could easily perform the movement. After a lunch break, riders and auditors gathered in the stabling area for an interesting lecture on saddle fit. Charlie Tota from The Dressage Connection reviewed with us the three points we must consider when fitting a saddle. We must be aware of the length of the saddle, the balance from right to left and forward to back, and the shoulder clearance. Charlie stressed the importance of giving the horse adequate room in the shoulder to allow the horse to complete a stride comfortably. At 2:30 we gathered in the Stillpoint Farm Casino to listen to a talk from Dr. Jenny Susser who is a sports psychologist. She discussed with us the importance of exercising certain "mental muscles" that are weak. We all made a list of two or three emotions we want more control over. My list had focus, patience, and the ability to manage stress. Dr. Susser explained the importance on having a ritual to work on strengthening these "muscles". It was once again another incredible day full of learning and fun. I cannot wait for tomorrow!

Cassie Schmidt