Lendon Gray Scholarship Committee,

Thank you for the generosity of this amazing committee and giving me the opportunity to learn from Ernst Herrmann and Heather Oleson. Heather has trained many horses to Grand Prix and is a very successful FEI rider. She has participated in many CDI’s, as well as the USEF Festival of Champions. Heather rode and trained with Ernst Herrmann for many years. Both trainers have the same underlying concept of dressage. However, they also differ in their experiences and different teaching techniques. I love the opportunity to ride with different trainers because of the plethora of ways that one movement or concept can be taught.

An example of this is the flying lead change. I have had the amazing opportunity to ride many horses with both trainers, all at different levels. One in particular is schooling third level. This is my first time teaching a horse flying changes when they have no experience with changes whatsoever. I have worked on fixing late changes or compacting and balancing changes from a previous hunter jumper horse to make them correct for dressage. Because this was my first time teaching the change from nothing, and the horses first time attempting a change, this was a huge learning experience for me.

In my clinics with Ernst, he had us holding counter canter on a 20-meter circle. This specific horse is very strong behind and counter canter comes easy to her. On the 20-meter counter canter circle, Ernst then had me move the haunches to the inside of the circle, then slowly change the bend with my new inside leg, so that she naturally felt it was easier to be on the correct lead instead of counter canter. Obviously, this is easier said than done and does not always work as planned, but that’s just a part of the experience!

In contrast, Heather had me doing a different exercise during the clinics to attempt a flying change. Heather asked to pick up the counter canter on the long side, then leg yield towards the quarter line keeping the same lead. At this point, she then asked me to push her haunches back towards the wall, keeping the shoulders towards the quarter line. This helped to straighten the horse and set her up correctly for a flying change. Once she is set up, I then asked for the change with touch of the whip to help her hind legs jump and change when asked. This exercise helped the horse sit and collect a little more for the change, so I found this very helpful.

Both clinician’s exercises have given me extra tools for my toolbox of training, and I have learned that each horse responds differently to exercises. While one might have worked great for this horse, it might not work well for the next horse that I train. Thank you so much for the opportunity to continue training with these amazing instructors, and I look forward to future training opportunities with Heather and Ernst.

Sincerely,

Jordyn Shaw