

Scholarship Report

August 17 2016

Dear Scholarship Committee,

Thank you for your generous gift! I have written the following report about the three-day boot camp that I attended with the help of your award. After boot camp I felt prepared as I could be for whatever my pony threw at me during the show.

Sincerely,

Merritt Perkins

Report

On the first day of boot camp half of our group did private workshops with Gail Kapiloff, a local trainer and judge, while the other half worked on equitation with our regular trainer Hollie McNeil. I started with Gail and rode test C for her so that she could see what my pony (Chadwick) and I needed to work on. Then we spent around forty minutes improving my canter, my 20 meter circles, and my free walks. One of the most helpful things we did was an exercise with 20 meter circles. Gail put cones up at the quarter points of the circle and I had to go around them. After a few minutes of circling the cones she took them away and had me pretend that they were still there. This helped my circles stay big enough. We also did shallow loop serpentines between the wall and the quarter wall. These seemed hard for Chadwick even though he is small and can make tight turns. I don't know how bigger horses can do them. These helped Chadwick bend and listen to my aids, which he doesn't enjoy doing.

After I rode, I worked on studying for the written test for a few hours. One of my teammate's parents made practice written tests for us so that we could review.

Later I spent time grooming Chadwick. Another parent taught me how to clip his fetlocks. I ended up clipping almost all of the hair on his legs! Chadwick is an Exmoor Pony so he is very fuzzy, and it took a long time, but he looked really nice afterwards. I also pulled his mane for a long time, as he has a very thick mane, but it was much easier to braid once it was nice and short!

At the end of the day we had a goal-setting session. We discussed how to make sure that your goal is realistic, achievable, and specific. Then everyone wrote down their goal so they would remember it. My goal was to keep my nerves under control because Chadwick sometimes picks up the wrong lead in canter when I am very nervous. We also practiced visualizing our tests in our heads, which ended up helping me stay calm during my actual test.

On the second day of boot camp, we switched who worked with Gail and who worked with Hollie. Before we rode we spent some time working on Balimo (balance in motion).

When I rode I definitely felt a lot looser thanks to the Balimo stretches that we did. One of my favorites was the shoulder/knee stretch. You lay on your back and cross your knee over your other leg. Then you try to touch your knee to the ground while keeping both shoulders on the ground.

I had two other riders working on equitation in the group with me. One of the things we talked about was the position of my hands. Whenever my dressage whip went above or below its correct position of across my thigh, it meant my hands were incorrect. Thinking about this helped because whenever I went to give Chadwick a tap with the whip I would remember to check my hand position.

At the end of the day we took personality quizzes. It was really interesting to see how my personality is very similar to what Chadwick's appears to be. Chadwick likes being in control of the situation, as do I. He also doesn't enjoy being bossed around, which is similar to me.

On the third (and final) day of boot camp, we had two big group rides and studied our required reading for the remainder of the day. In my group there were seven other riders. The point of this ride was to pretend that we were in a warm up arena at the Youth Dressage Festival, so for the first 15 to 20 minutes everyone did their own thing. This was challenging since we had two kicking horses in the group. At the end of this warm up, Hollie asked us if we felt warmed up. Most of us said yes. After that we had a normal group lesson.

Later on we made halter hooks out of old horseshoes, which was really fun. I painted mine purple and put a blue bow on it. We also made stall cards with glitter and stencils. Even the older girls liked doing this.

Boot camp really helped me prepare for the show and I am glad that with your award I had the opportunity to attend. I also had a fabulous time at the Youth Dressage Festival this year, and did really well on my written test, which I was excited about. The scholarship helped my family a lot since both my sister Hadley and I attend boot camp as well as the Youth Dressage Festival. We couldn't have done it without your generous gift.

Thank you,

Merritt Perkins