

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate at the Boot Camp held at Riding Right Farm. The camp helps me and my horse become even more prepared for the Youth Dressage Festival. The camp is on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The first activity that we do in the morning as a group is balimo. I love when Hollie McNeil does balimo in the morning, because it loosens us riders so that when we ride later in the afternoon we can follow our horse's movements without struggle. Balimo also helps us feel the "kinks" in our horses a lot easier. After balimo the intro riders would separately ride their dressage tests with Gail Kapiloff, after they rode their test Gail would work with us on any difficulties we or the horse had during the test. While the training level to first level riders would ride in groups with Hollie working on our positions like we would for equitation. When anyone had any free time we would have study sessions on the books that we needed to read for our written tests.

On Monday, I rode with Hollie to work on equitation. Personally I think my weakest parts of my position would be my leg. I tend to be tight in my leg and when I get tight in my legs it affects my seat. Doing balimo does help a lot with loosening my leg, though another exercise that Hollie taught me is half posting. Half posting is posting but not touching the saddle (posting in the air) doing so strengthens my leg and puts it in place.

On Tuesday, after we got done with balimo you would ride with whomever you didn't ride with on Monday. For instance on Monday I rode with Hollie so on Tuesday I rode with Gail. Every year I get excited to ride with Gail because I always learn something new each year. After I rode my test Gail asked me how I thought it was. I told her, I personally didn't think I rode very well because my horse Montie would get excited and pick up speed mostly in the corners, and I would try to slow him down but that made him go against the bit. After I said this she understood and had me ride on a circle at B. She told me to do half turns so I ended up at the wall between the letters M and B, and then she had me do the same thing on the other side. After I had gotten the exercises down she had me ride one loops. Though when I went in my corners she had me push him deeper into the corner and get the inside flexion which kept him round and he didn't brace. After this victory I was so glad to be feeling what I did in that lesson, and I was even less nervous for the show.

On Wednesday, we worked on some new balimo stretches. Though before we got to the stretches we started out with just

plucking our tendons (neck, shoulders, hips, knees, ankles) which help loosen our bodies right away. One of the exercises that we did was where you lie on your back and you raise one of your knees at an angle but you keep your foot flat on the ground, and you keep your other leg straight out. Then you take the opposite hand of the knee you have raised and pull the bent knee over the straight leg. Though while you're doing this you have to keep your shoulders down. This exercise helps loosen your hips and opens your shoulders.

After balimo we were split into two groups, the intro and the training level and up riders. We were split into two groups for our riding lesson. In my lesson there were 10 girls, and Hollie gave us 20 minutes to warm up. Having this lesson prepares us to ride in the warm up arena at the show. Having this lesson is also great because we can see how our horses will react to being in a crowded space. I had a good ride in that lesson too. My horse Montie wasn't so relaxed in the beginning of the lesson, but as I got his attention he was very supple.

Since today was the last day of camp one of the moms who read the books made multiple choice tests for us on, the books we read, the online reading, and the prize list. Every year I am so grateful of this because this gives me a chance to see what I know and what I need to study more of.

At the end of Boot Camp I felt as prepared as I would ever be. This year I placed 9th overall in my division and I couldn't be happier with my rides. I couldn't have done it without the help of the scholarship.