

Dressage for Kids Atlanta

In late 2019, I was generously awarded a scholarship from Dressage4Kids to attend the Atlanta D4K Clinic and Competition held at the Georgia International Horse Park. I attended the previous year for the first time and I was very excited to be able to attend again this year. I joined with several friends from Hilltoppers Pony Club to form a team for the competition and we made practice written tests and discussed the reading assignment before we arrived. The clinic is held for 2 days prior to the final Sunday competition.

Lendon Gray was one of two instructors including Jos Sevriens and we also had many speakers and presenters during the clinic portion. We heard from Emma Sevriens regarding her team experience this year, had a demo ride from Ciera Foley at Grand Prix level, and heard from judges Margaret Freeman and Sandy Osborn. I was also asked to demonstrate the Children's FEI test. We also audit all of the other riders sessions and have wonderful speakers discussing dressage and preparing us for our future goals. One of the most important things we are taught is to journal about our daily riding and take notes during events. These clinics provide a remarkable amount of information and is unlike any other clinic experience around.

My lessons were especially challenging with both instructors. With Lendon Gray, I was able to ride some of the newer movements for my pony that we will hopefully develop further in 2020. We rode our first half passes and learned to maintain the correct bend and go back and forth between leg yielding and half passes. We are hoping to ride the Pony FEI tests later this year. Lendon is always pushing us to ride our very best and stay very tuned in to both the horse and instructor. Developing the listening and responding skills is crucial to learning the most in your lessons.

With Jos Sevriens, my lesson was focused on my seat and straightness. My pony and I were winners of the Region 3 Dressage Seat Equitation Semi Finals and had been invited to finals at Lamplight just prior to the clinic so our lesson developed straightness and used many halts to determine the evenness of my seat, leg, and hand. By the end of our ride we were achieving very straight and square halts regularly and the straightness helped carry over to more balance in our counter canter and simple changes. I hope to take advantage of this super instructor again since he is local to the Atlanta area.

On the final day we participated in a team and individual competition including written test, test riding and equitation. Our team, the Deadly Dressage Divas, won overall and I won high score pony, USPC, and 12 and under champion. We love getting together for the team portion and stall decorating competition. Cahuilla Dressage and Anne Margaret Meyers helped sponsor our team and coached. She was also a speaker at the dinner roundtable discussion. Many great sponsors make this event happen through their financial support and donation of amazing prizes. Our local videographer Richard's Equine Video also donated our lesson videos which is a super learning tool. Thank you to Triple Crown, Wilsun Horse Blankets, Correct Connect and GDCTA and especially long term organizer in Atlanta, Liz Molloy.

I am very thankful for the scholarship from Dressage4Kids. Without it my budget would not have covered this amazing clinic in the same month as Regionals. The one thing I learned in the previous year was not to let anything, including the expense of the sport, stand in the way. Working hard fundraising and making contacts has provided me with a very affordable and competitive pony and opportunities like these to work with the very best instructors. I make so many good friends and I know that this group of riders in the D4K TEAM clinics will be the future of our sport and I am so glad to be a part of it. D4K returns to Atlanta September 4-6, 2020.



Maren Hanson and In My Feelings



Auditors



Emma Seviens

Margaret Freeman, judge/speaker with Lendon Gray





Sandy Osborn, judge and speaker



Ciera Foley Grand Prix demo rider



Maren Fouché-Hanson and Lendon Gray

The Deadly Dressage Divas



Organizer Elizabeth Molloy with Alexis Troutman and Maren Fouché-Hanson



Jo's Sevriens and Anne Margaret Meyers at roundtable discussion



