

My name is Yvonne Kusserow and I am from Dallas, Texas where we operate Rocking M Stables. Most of our students are part of the D4K program and we have hosted several clinics with Lendon in the past. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship thru the TRAINING4TEACHING program and attended the 2024 Trainers Conference in Loxahatchee, Florida. This year's conference featured Sven Rothenberger and Sabine Schut-Kery!

It was my first-time auditing and I had a great time! I was thinking about what would be most interesting to share with you in this summary, it not being too lengthy or boring to read. I watched, listened and made notes simultaneously and what I found most interesting and sometimes funny were the short comments from both instructors while riders took a break and Q&A's at the end of each ride from the audience.

Each rider had a 45-minute lesson with one of the clinicians each day. Four riders in the morning and four riders in the afternoon with a 45-minute lunch break for everyone! Trainers and Adult Amateurs were represented in this clinic with horse's ages vary from 7 to 16.

Starting with my first note and for me probably the most important one while watching other riders in a clinic of this level.

#1 Fitness

It was a reminder that I need to be as fit as I can if I want to be successful in the saddle and being able to being fair to my horse! Watching each rider work for nearly an hour and staying focused was helpful for me to then reflect on my own stamina! If you don't have good endurance and you need to take many breaks, you most likely will miss or not reach the rewarding end of a training moment during your ride!

That brings me to a quote I wrote down namely "Whatever you do, do it well/correctly".

#2 Focus

While watching rides over two days it was evident that the more advanced riders had the ability to stay with the instructor and the task that was given from beginning to end while others needed to take a mental or physical break more frequently. For me that means, when I get instructions, I won't come up with excuses or questions, those will only interfere with my focus... just listen and ride!

When I ride by myself, I set myself a goal to focus on for example walk/canter transitions on a 20m circle. Schooling it 5 times each direction without adding anything else in. That way I can practice to stay with one exercise for longer and not get distracted!

One of the audience's questions was about how hard it can be watching yourself ride in videos. This was actually a fun discussion and what it basically came down to was:

#3 "Stay positive"

Watching and evaluating your own rides is helpful and necessary to become a better rider! The key is, don't be too hard on yourself. I liked that statement a lot and nearly everyone in the audience smiled and started conversations about it!

With both clinicians being originally from Germany, I found it fun to listen to their choice of words and how they honestly tried to help each rider with their different challenges but also trying to make them feel good about themselves. A great example was the conversation about

#4 Hand position:

- Low hands are correct, high hands cut the picture
- Only low hands can create balance
- Good riding includes less use of hands
- If hands are low, the horse can move up and out

And at the end Sven said:

“Don’t feel bad if it doesn’t work for you, body shape has to do with it!”

Everyone got a laugh out of it. Nothing else to add. 😊

Another interesting topic was the discussion in the difference about

#5 Überstreichen (Clear release of both or one rein) and **giving the reins** (no more contact).

Basically, Überstreichen is only shown during a test to demonstrate the rider’s ability to be independent in his aids. Giving the reins should be used many times during a ride to check on suppleness in the rider and the horse and to make sure the reins are attached the horse’s mouth but not restricting!

“Sometimes it’s happening just in your mind and is invisible”

Last, I would like to share some quotes and instruction from both, Sabine and Sven which I found helpful and interesting. Don’t forget, these were directed to different riders but most of it I could apply to my own riding!

- Hands need to stay quiet, they are a reflection on what is going on in/behind the saddle
- Horses have to move in their own way, we cannot always control every step
- Train your horse in the walk
- While walking... focus and don’t stop while I am talking to the audience
- You are never too old to ride without stirrups
- Balance (in a rider) changes thru life, always look for it
- You need a toolbox for training
- As a rider you need to be able to take criticism
- If your horse is not jumping in the canter half pass... stop it
- Not sitting straight means I don’t have a good attitude
- GO FORWARD!

Thank you D4K for this opportunity! I really recommend to audit the Trainers Conference. It is a great chance to watch and listen to top trainers, visit with old friends or make new connections!