

My Winter In Wellington

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This past winter I had the opportunity to spend the winter in Wellington training and experiencing the highest level of Dressage! Though my winter went far from what I expected, I still learned so much with Dressage4Kids and Lendon Grey greatly to thank for it! The original plan was for us to spend January through the end of March in Wellington but it didn't quite go as planned. My FEI gelding who I received through D4K is an incredibly talented, older Grand Prix horse but also very smart and a bit set in his ways. Heading into the new year he started testing me in new ways that needed to be quickly corrected by our trainer which left us making the decision to stay in Georgia in January and wait to leave with our trainer at the beginning of February.

We arrived in Wellington on January 31st with both my FEI Gelding and my younger gelding who was just being brought back into work after a couple of years off. I had been to Wellington a few times in the past to train and show but this was my first time staying for an extended period of time. After the horses settled for a couple of days I had my first lesson with Lendon since the fall. It was great to get to lesson with her and show her the improvements Flori and I had made since she had seen us last. I feel like no matter how many times you have ridden with Lendon you learn something new in each lesson. Flori is a very nice horse but he is also very challenging and can be rather reactive at times. He does not like to feel blocked in his shoulder so Lendon had

a work a lot on getting Flori a little more up and out in the frame so his hind leg could continue to step under while allowing his shoulder somewhere to go. She also had us on work subtle but effective half halts to clean up our test movements and made sure we knew not to give up points in the easier parts of the tests such as the centerlines and corners. I think what pleased me most out of all the lessons I had with Lendon in Wellington was that I was able to show her the improvements I had made on different movements. Especially like our single changes and tempi's which had not been clean the first time I rode him with her in February of 2021 before my first CDI.

Not only was I able to experience a lot in the saddle but there is also so much to experience out of the saddle in Wellington. We went to watch the Freestyles and Jumpers on Fridays and Saturdays, including the CDI 5* Grand Prix which was held at WEF this past season. Lendon also invited me to attend some of the WIT lectures which I absolutely loved and was extremely grateful for the invite. Getting to listen to and meet Betsy Juliano is something that I will never forget. Heading into March we had finally entered our first CDI of the season, Palm Beach Derby, and had planned to make the jump to FEI Young Riders but unfortunately, accidents happen with horses. Flori ended up getting cast in his stall and Global and tweaking his left hind stifle. After talking with all our vets at home and in Wellington the decision was made to go ahead and come home early. It was not an easy decision but the best decision.

I am forever grateful I got to still spend a month in Wellington and still learned so much in the time! I am also extremely grateful that all Flori needed was time to heal his left hind and to now have him back sound and cleared for full work! I am looking forward to hopefully making the trip back to Wellington next winter with both of my boys. I am also so beyond thankful to my family and Dressage4kids for making these opportunities available to me. Without both of these factors, I would not be the rider I am today or experienced all that I have.