

Hi, I am Samantha Stenger and because of a D4K scholarship, I was able to attend the Midwest Dressage Festival at Hampton Green Farm.

My pony, Shadow Song, and I are showing 1st level and are hoping to move up to 2nd level soon.

I am always excited to ride with Lendon. I always learn so many new things and she also lets me know if we are getting better and moving forward.

I learned many things at the HGF clinic. One of my biggest problems, I will shamefully admit is that I wag my pony's head. Shadow gets strong, locks his jaw, and tries to take over. In the past, I have dealt with it by wagging his head one way and then the other. This wagging is mentioned on my dressage tests (judges really hate it) and also drives my mother crazy. Lendon told me to NOT wag his head but instead to give to him for a stride. I found out that it does work..When I give to him we do not end up in a fight and we can restart and there isn't a big interruption in our movement.

Lendon also told me to do A LOT of "goes and whoas" . Carl Hester once wrote that during a ride he does around 1000 transitions. It felt like in our lesson, that we must have done at least that many! I did find out that the transitions really do help. I realized that before I was depending on a 20 meter circle and that I really needed to stop with the circling, After all the "whoas and goes", Shadow started to listen to me more and started waiting for me to tell him what to do. This really helped with my trot and canter lengthenings.

Lendon also work on my pesky shoulders. I am an event rider as well as a dressage rider and I have been doing a lot more eventing this year and jumping more and my shoulders are terrible. I seem to have forgotten how to sit up and not be hunched over. Lendon told me that if I was leaning forward, I could not use my back. I mentioned to my Mom that Shadow use to listen better and she asked me to figure out what I had been doing when he was listening and what was I doing differently now. After working on my shoulders in the lesson and having Sarah help me after the lesson (THANK YOU Sarah!), I had one of those lightbulb moments. I realized that I use to sit up straight and was using my back and seat and now that I was riding more hunched over, I really wasn't being an effective rider and Shadow was taking advantage of it.

I learned a lot by watching the other lessons as well. I train horses at home and I like watching because there might be a horse that has the same struggle that one of mine has. By watching Lendon work through the problem with the rider, I can see how to apply that to my horse. so I can help that horse become better.

I also get inspired by the other riders. I see the way they ride and how far they have come, how much they improved. The riders at the clinic are so dedicated and are so willing to learn. They work so hard to be a better ride and a small improvement mean so much to them. You can't help but feel inspired watching them and sometimes I want to ride all over again so that I can learn even more.

One of the things that I love about D4K is that we meet other riders that love Dressage and it feels like we are not alone. We form a team and we encourage one another. I love seeing other D4K riders at shows and love to cheer them on!

The speakers at the clinic are always great. I hope to be like Janne (Rumbough) when I am her age. She is so full of joy, excitement and enthusiasm. It is very obvious that she still loves what she does. One of the things that she said that will stick with me is that she would not let herself move up a level until she got a 75%. She said that the 75% she got at training level was more important to her than the 65% she got at First Level.

Thank you to everyone who helped put this clinic together. I am excited to take home what I have learned and to put it to use, thank you so much for this opportunity!

Sincerely,

Samantha Stenger