

On October 14-15th I was able to attend the NEDA Symposium featuring Kyra Kyrklund. I received a scholarship from D4K to help pay for this experience and I am deeply grateful. Kyra was direct and to the point and a wealth of knowledge. She used tools and exercises to improve each horses'and riders' experience and as is often the case with these clinics I have found she emphasized the basics. In particular she focused on rider position, proper use of the aids, and straightness through all the levels and movements. For me as a junior rider seeing these talented riders on these very gifted horses be reminded of things that I too have to focus on daily was reassuring that we as riders no matter our level have so much in common in this discipline of dressage. The following is a list of my notes from the clinic, I hope people find them helpful.

Horse 1

-have a plan for your rides, the what, why, and how of what you plan to do. Don't go around the ring like a free range hen

-how are the basics and the Grand Prix connected?-you must "influence" the horse at every level

-think of training as a step ladder, every movement has steps-do not be resistant to step down and rework something if you need to. At the same time don't let one thing stop you in the progression of training of your horse ie flying changes, move to something else for awhile if you hit a wall

-make sure you have different tools and exercises to develop the things you are trying to train,not every exercise works for every horse

-every horse can get a little better at something

-***seat and position are the MOST important thing

-all riders must be able to be able to sit the trot comfortably and consistently, be able to put the horse on the bit, learn ½ halts and how and when to ride them, to influence their horse

-if you want to change your horse you must be willing to change what you are doing if needed

-aids- SEAT is your control center,it centers all your aids, it needs weight, it influences horse balance and your steering,should be able to steer by weight, if you are crooked elsewhere in your body it will affect seat and weight. Train your seat bones. Relax the muscles of your butt

LEG- second most important- tells go forward and yield to pressure

HANDS- steer and contain

The more **clear** and **smaller** your aids the better

Give a small aid,small, quick(like a whip tip), and clear-how does your horse react? If no reaction apply aid medium strength, still quick and clear. If still no reaction XL aid still quick and clear. Any reaction to the aid is better than none. ALWAYS go back to the small aid once trained to it

EXERCISE train your seats bones to correctly shift your weight. On a circle look to the outside but use inside seat bone to turn on circle. Control your seat and middle so horse understands to carry you. If you are wobbly horse gets confused to try to compensate.

EXERCISE speed and length of step is controlled by weight posting or sitting. Try post up 2 steps then sit one. Can you maintain it. How soft do you land? Try to sit softly. Change posting speed to change length of step. Do

between letters as guidepost. Accelerate if anything in corners. At sitting trot you are still coming up and landing can change the speed of that too. Think of a bouncing ball and how hard you bounce it- that affects the speed it comes back up.Use your WEIGHT to control speed not leg.

When applying a leg aid 5cm back is enough-back further is not better, that does not emphasis the aid, it shifts your weight which should be the MAJOR influence-VERY important in the flying changes

When emphasizing a leg aid it should not be applied harder , but quicker “bing, bing” like the tick of a whip with tempo. Use outside leg to get them a bit quicker forward especially in canter.

When you collect you want SHORTER more underneath steps, NOT SLOWER steps

Ride the lines you plan, do not let the horse take over, make him wait for your aid

-“it is not forbidden to talk to them”

-still reward your horse even if it is the 99th time they have done something right

-counter canter work and walk counter canter transitions very good for development of collected work and flying changes

-have eyes on the ground to evaluate your changes

If you can do a change correctly 9 times out of ten and it goes bad in the show ring, it was just bad luck

BASIC THINGS ARE DIFFICULT

Horse 2

Collection is a sliding scale through all levels even though not discussed seriously til 4th level
Curved slinky example- you can not affect the top line without affecting the underline, this goes to the use of your weight and seat and timing- if you hit the back in wrong moment, the back comes down

If you push down the wither, there is no place to come up, rider position affected and affected by tension

Think-is the hind leg BENDING and PUSHING forward-if the back is hollow this can not happen.

Try on yourself-stand with a hollow back and try lifting your leg. Round your back and try lifting your leg again-MUCH easier

EXERCISE halt and try to get hind legs under body small steps, 2 at a time. Can also encourage this in the turn on the fore hand but do not let the front legs go off or you lose benefit. These small steps are encouraging the hind end under the body and teaching the horse to carry behind. When done with exercise let reins out without moving, again encouraging carrying under at rest.

Leg yielding-important to know where you want to go,where front and hind legs are at all times.

Can you stop in leg yield and not lose shoulder?(outside leg)

Play with length of steps but same rhythm, same rhythm throughout leg yield, LOOK where you are going

Horse 3

Focus in this horse was rhythm and extending stride length without speed (PRE). Want calmer in step vs faster.

The sit 2 post 1 exercise worked well here-use your muscles when you sit down, lengthen step with post

Teaching the horse the Spanish walk can teach them to use their shoulder, want horse to use whole shoulder, tap outside shoulder with whip. Is it there, have you felt it? Then repeat it. Then do same exercise in trot.

Training this horse to use his shoulder more completely was an important example of breaking down the problem in training to it's simplest element and correcting it.

Posting and standing up 2 then sitting one is a good exercise to lengthen stride

Don't stop riding when they do something good

If you have control of the small things, you are less likely to make mistakes in the movements

REFINE BASICS

Day 2 exercise- reins run through a grab strap- to help stop fiddling so much with hand, a way to get over automatic things you do in response to the horse up front

-if the horse is not straight you can NEVER use the power of the hind leg to push forward

Horse 4

Rider position affect on horse was focus

-if you move your leg too much in the changes you are weaker in your weight

-you must dictate frame you want him in

-In front of the leg MUST include lifting the front

-ask for more action with the leg but your hand must always be steady

-resist horse in back of upper arm, not in the hand-feel the pressure in the tricep in your core, think that there is a hand apply pressure behind your tricep, you tighten it to use it but do not pull elbow back

-you can not pull yourself down into the saddle, you must sit still, let your weight come down, let seat come between elbows, when horse pulls you forward feel like he is pulling you down through the elbow

-don't jam heel down it makes hip and knee straight "carry toe vs pushing heel"

EXERCISE-Whip across whether in both hands under the thumbs to keep hands even, properly positioned and STEADY, can go from this to bridging the reins

-softly back with leg in changes especially if horse tends to run through the change. Don't push the step longer in the change or it will land flatter

Horse 5

-spooky horse-rather than using shoulder in to get past something use renvers- better because horse will not feel trapped on inside, they have to feel free on one side, confront the situation, engage the hind end, but you still have control of the shoulder. Want flexion not bend in neck

-use of saddle trap another great tool for steadying the hand, when doing pat with outside hand so you do not pull with inside hand as most people will when they pet. If horse is pulling down on you can release outside hand and lift briefly then release. Never use both hands to lift the horse

-correct moment for canter aid is when outside hind leg is down, if you are late with aid wait for next step vs do incorrect

-more inside leg for the forward of the canter depart so you do not complicate lateral work

Day two passage work-half halt on the leg that is not staying on the ground long enough

Horse 6

Piaffe work in hand

From ground, in hand control the outside rein, ask horse to do turn on forehand. Want them light in hand, under enough, not just lifting the hind leg, want it brought under as well

-"good" does not need to be a 10 every time, good is done in the right way-when horse happens to do the right thing, praise in the right moment

-don't overdo lesson

-when take horse off turn on fore hand to long side start piaffe in hand work in shoulder in

Day 2 half pass work

-half pass to R-Rleg pushes forward, L rein allows left neck to lengthen, do not chase horse with outside leg

-practice haunches in on centerline, starting at walk, switching L<->R as zig zag prep

-if getting stuck in half pass or wanting longer stride think medium

-ride ON A LINE in half pass, if on a diagonal and shoulder falls off line, half halt outside rein back on

Horses 7&8

Flying change work

Change forward but not so much that flat and not up more than forward

-there is NO BEND in the change

-don't use change leg too much, too early. The more you swing the leg, the less power you have in the leg and the rest of your body. Just slide the leg, do not kick inward

-new inside rein must allow shoulder to come up in change, can you pat in counter canter with new inside rein, pat with new inside rein after change to train yourself giving here

-need straight without bend up front. Try riding counter canter through corner to diagonal will make you concentrate on straightness more. Counter canter with slight counter flexion to encourage straightness.

-sit in the MIDDLE through change

-leg yielding as a tool to correct leaning-only do the number of steps to correct problem then go straight

- do 1 change then wait til have quality of canter you want to do next, have the gait quality between changes

-walk pirouettes are prep for canter pirouettes

-in pirouette- outside rein says don't run away

-can use crop on shoulder easier too tap shoulder

And makes more noise

-it takes 100,000 times of doing something correctly to get ingrained. It takes 5,000 times of doing something differently to break a habit but another 100,000 times of doing it correctly to have it ingrained anew