

At the end of June, I had the amazing opportunity to attend the Horsemastership Clinic at Hilltop Farm with Ali Brock. I brought Ruben D4K (2010 Rubinero x Witchcraft [Worldly x Espri]), whom I received through D4K's horse donation program in the fall of 2022. The first two days were lessons with Ali, and the third day we had lessons with Lendon.

The first day, we focused on trot half pass and reinback, as those had been the weaker points in our Junior tests at that point in the show season. In the half pass, we worked on having enough bend, but holding the rhythm and being able to ride straight ahead at any point. Ali had us start by going down the longside with a few steps of shoulder in then half pass 3 steps, then straight in shoulder in, then half pass again. We did this exercise until I was able to truly have control of the half pass, and we were able to do a shorter, steeper half pass keeping the same feel. We then moved on to reinback, which he typically gets claustrophobic in, and drops the poll and rushes back. We started by working on a circle at the walk, and asking for the halt with just my seat, then walking. To cue the reinback, Ali had me sit back and just lightly touch the rein, and really just ask Ruben for one step, then halt again, until he was a bit more relaxed, then we asked for a few calm steps.

The second day we touched on the half pass and reinback, and Ruben picked up right where we left off, so we moved on to some canter work from the FEI Junior tests. Ruben typically has clean changes, but they sometimes lack thoroughness and being on the aid, so we worked on getting him a little sharper to the change aid and those improved very quickly. We wrapped up the ride by working on some canter halts, reiterating halting with just my seat, we went back to walk/halt and trot/halt.

Day 3, we kept it a light ride since he felt a little tired. We ran through a few pieces of the Junior tests keeping the feel from the previous two days. Further than that, we worked on our extended walk to collected walk transitions. Overall, Ruben felt amazing, just a little tired, so we were all happy to let him have a lighter lesson day.

Days 1&2 we had Yamuna body rolling and meditation with Kara Pomeroy. Yamuna body rolling helps to stretch and relax your muscles. It really helped pinpoint where I'm stuck and correlate that to some challenges in the saddle. We had some really fantastic lectures from horse sales, breeding/conformation, teaching Spanish walk in-hand, and common emergencies that field vets get called to, and how to handle them.

This is my favorite clinic to attend (whether auditing or riding) each year! Thank you to everyone who makes this clinic run so smoothly, and to the Hilltop staff for being so welcoming!

This clinic helped to prepare Ruben and I for both of our first times at a NAYC and our first CDI!



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