

Thank you for awarding me a D4K scholarship. I used it to participate in the TEAM clinic at Riding Right Farm on July 17th and 18th. Previous to the TEAM Clinic I had gotten into an accident, I was smashed in the trailer, between my horse and the trailer. I had a major concussion and a crush injury to my right arm. Because of this accident I was not cleared by my Doctor to ride in the clinic. Due to this I had requested to have my trainer ride in my place while I watched. I understand this situation was unusual, I appreciate your flexibility by allowing me to apply my scholarship money to this TEAM event. Despite the circumstances I learned a great deal.

My horse, Minnie, came to us as a failed jumper and had been incorrectly trained in contact. She had some conformation issues (unbalanced, downward, leaning and no topline) and we recently discovered she has health issues (navicular and kissing spine). Over the last two years we have spent time developing and toning muscle, correctly treating her physical issues, and her acceptance of contact. We have made progress and are ready to move on to the next phase to have her move beyond training level, this is why we sought Lendon's advice.

On day one Lendon worked with Minnie on managing downward transitions, the canter, and the upward transition from free to medium walk. In each of these movements Minnie has had trouble maintaining her balance of weight from front to back. This traditionally caused her to become heavy and fall on the forehand and hang on to the bit.

I learned that by giving her an 'upbump', as Lendon called it, we could better communicate to her not to hand on the bit and to hold herself up. This same idea held true in the canter. On her stronger side (left) exercises of half halt, release, then regain contact helped her carry herself. On the more difficult (right) side adding up bumps when she got heavy was very helpful.

On the second day things became more clear and Lendon did exercises that really put her together. Minnie was responding well. Traditionally after half an hour of exercise she would become heavy and because she was uncomfortable in her body she would become irritable and disobedient. However this session ended with Minnie light and happy.

One of the many things I learned was how to encourage Minnie to shift her weight to her haunches. For example Lending said to slow her down (shorter trot) when she gets heavy to bring her back on her haunches. Another extremely helpful point that resonated with me is the idea that the bit is not hers. So when she gets heavy Lendon said to do one of several things (1)drop her, (2) wiggle the bit, (3) up bump, or (4) bend left or right to let her know- it's my bit and not hers. This concept was eye opening. Though it may seem quite simple it is these bits of wisdom that help me as a rider look at riding challenges in a different way.

Thank you again for your continued support of young riders and for your encouragement. It gave me a unique opportunity that I may not have had otherwise.

Thank you,

Isabelle Woodcock