

I had the privilege to attend the TEAM clinic at Chagrin Valley Farms in Chagrin Falls, Ohio because D4K was generous enough to award me the Lendon Gray Scholarship. The facility was incredibly functional, the setup was perfect for their boarding, lessons, shows, and clinics.

We had three lectures. The first was from Dr. Keckler on ulcers, which was incredibly informative. The second was from a fitness professional who took us through core exercises to strengthen our position. She did not know anything about horses, which was why she was so helpful! She was looking at us riders as overall athletes that need to have solid posture, just like any other athlete. The next lecture we had was from Lisa Goretta, an international TD. The biggest takeaway I had was that it is illegal to show in a D4K saddle pad unless D4K owns your horse. Finally, we had a lecture from Lendon about the importance and variations of the warmup. She explained that your warmup at the show is what you have to do to get your horse at his best for the show arena. For example, Lendon had one horse she only warmed up for the Grand Prix a few minutes in the basics and one she had to warm up in the snaffle and then switch to the double as she went into the show arena!

My lessons were incredibly informative. I have ridden four different horses with Lendon and Ruble is the first horse I have ridden with her that has actually been round! In fact, Lendon explained that he was almost too round. I've been riding him long and low because his life before me was always going with a hollow back. Lendon encouraged that he was in a stable enough stage that it would be safe to begin riding him in a higher, yet still round, frame.

Some points I learned from watching the other lessons:

- You prove you have the horse's back by being able to stretch at any moment because you should always feel like you could get a bit of stretch.
- Active does not equal fast.
- A walk or canter pirouette must have a perfect first stride, and you should start small and then make it bigger if needed.
- You should be getting the exact same response from the exact same aid every single time.
- Counter canter should have the same quality canter as true canter.
- If your rein back is 3-4 steps, ask for 3, and if you get 4, it's ok. You should vary the number of steps you ask for so the horse does not always learn to stop after 3 when one day you'll want 5.
- You do not teach a good stretch, a good stretch comes from good training.