

Lyla Andrick
Dressage4kids Scholarship Report

Fall 2023 UConn Dressage Team and Ember's Exercise Report

Try outs

Assigned UCDT try out horse: Night Star

This summer I hadn't ridden at all because I was working a 50+ hour work week and my grandmother came to live with us. I'm happy to have drawn Night Star because after a six-month riding hiatus, he was a straightforward horse to do a test on. I rode Training 3, and I was the last rider to go. Night Star is a little old and he gets easily bothered now to the point that he was so bothered at the jumping team try outs the day before that they sent him back to the barn. I've ridden him before, and he just doesn't like riders who push him around or hang on his mouth. He's been UConn's best horse for over ten years and has earned his rights to be bothered. When I warmed him up, he'd already gone three times, so we mostly walked around during our ten minutes of schooling. The test went very well except he broke at the canter down the long side on our second canter. I think it was because I didn't want to make him upset by pushing him too hard, so I wasn't using enough leg. My coach had me ride the movement again and he was fine. I was put on the team as the alternate rider for Upper. Last year I was the alternate rider for Lower.

Week 1

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Tesla

I rode Tesla in Fall 2022 for my last five lessons, so we are pals. She has changed over the summer, she's now six years old and is more fit than she was last year. She is still very downhill, and I find doing a lot of sitting trot helps to get her off her forehead and prevent me from falling with her. She can get quick now, it's not that she's speeding around but she'll get unbalanced and charge around, so you must try and fix that right away with her. She's a good mare. We did a "get-to-know-you" ride because I am in a lesson group with all new UConn students.

Week 2

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Celebration

Celebration is another UConn favorite, she's very straightforward but has some habits from being a popular choice in the jumping lessons. Cele starts off so slow and gets hotter the more she warms up but is used to cantering around a course and coming back to the center of the arena at a halt. We practiced our dressage tests today, so I tried to keep her working around the outside of the arena when I wasn't testing. Our test went fine, we must work on consistent tempo, it was certainly not a high-quality training level test because it takes constant half halts to maintain a working trot. Our free walk is not very good because she grabs the bit and yanks. Most of the UConn horses will do this because they're also used for public beginner lessons where they aren't ridden in contact. Cele has a very comfortable canter, and our canter circles are very good. I'm starting to have an issue where I'm pitched forward in the saddle, I think after so much time off I need to go back to some basics. We have four riders in our lesson group, so we only got to practice our test once. When we aren't testing, we can either stand and watch or school around, so I was practicing some trot transitions from working trot to medium trot to get Cele more responsive to my half halt.

Week 3

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

We didn't have a lesson this week because our trainer was ill. Last week, our practicum coach asked me to ride Ember during the training class before our dressage lesson. I rode Ember in my Spring 2022 Independent Study. She is not the greatest horse but she's my favorite at UConn. Last year I was always getting assigned Ember in our dressage lessons, and we had a terrible time. She had a habit of biting because another independent study rider didn't get after her for it. I wanted to do a training study with her but over the winter break of 2021-22 she tried to cut her foot off and went on stall rest, so she became a rehabilitation study. We had a good time by the end of the program, and she hasn't tried to bite me ever again.

This year, Ember isn't getting used much in dressage because she's not an ideal dressage horse and is suited for intermediate-advanced and advanced riders only. Ember will test every rider to see if she can be the Head Mare and confident riders are best suited for her shenanigans. She isn't mean, she's very smart. They use her for jumping and she's goes along alright. The practicum coach just wanted me to give her extra exercise since she doesn't get ridden every day.

Our first fitness session was just some basic walk trot canter. She doesn't have a great canter because she's built so downhill, she has to have a really high-quality trot to pick up a good canter and if she gets a few good strides in that's a win for Ember. Ember has lost over 100 pounds since spring 2022 and she is much happier for it. Riding her now is much less of a fight for me and it's nice to see she's building some top line.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Ember and I are working on some lateral work. For someone so downhill, she tends to put her weight on her front two feet and slam her hooves into the ground when she gets unbalanced. I like to start every lesson with Ember with some groundwork as a reminder that *I* am the head mare and help her understand that her hind legs are functional. We do several minutes of in hand turn on the forehand and turn on the haunches. Some of UConn's horses can do in hand lateral work well and some cannot, it depends on which instructor was teaching the student training classes. Ember is pretty good at it; except she'll anticipate turn on the forehand whenever I lift the training stick so sometimes, we must stand there and work on her patience. I'm starting to try in hand leg yield while she's walking, and she would get a few steps in. I like to praise her once she understands something new and then walk it off. I got on and did several lateral walk exercises. She occasionally gets the aids but has trouble differentiating forward leg pressure from lateral leg pressure, so you really must exaggerate your seat with her and push your knee into the side you don't want her to fall out on. My trouble with this is then I get stuck in my seat, and I'll get tight somewhere. I like doing lateral work with no stirrups to help with this and Ember is really responsive to it until all the other training horses start trotting and cantering and then she'll start running and get too excited to pay attention. We ended the fitness session with a good shallow loop serpentine that was a leg yield off the wall and leg yield back to the wall situation. The riders in this training class cool out bareback and I think in Fall 2021 I wouldn't ride Ember bareback if my life depended on it but we do it all the time. She's comfortable because she's still fat.



Week 4

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Celebration

I am riding Celebration again today and we are working on lateral work at the walk. Our coach has us to head to the walk leg yield and Celebration is not very good at it. It takes so much half halting to get a few steps out of her and once you get it you must make a scene for her to know she did the right thing. We did one lap of trot and canter and spent most of the lesson working on the leg yield. Cele is an older horse and didn't get as much lateral work in her training fundamentals class because there was a different barn manager at her time. I can get very stuck with Cele just like Ember with the lateral work and surprisingly, I think Ember is better at it than her. Cele seemed to get really bored with the exercises and we did some trot work to take a break in between exercises. After having a great ride with Ember before the lesson, this lesson felt a little frustrating. Ember and Cele are very different horses, I find I can't ride all horses the same way.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember was so good for today's exercise ride. We were trotting around in frame doing tons of leg yield work and quarterlines and centerlines and trot to halt to trot transitions. We were going around so well I thought I might have gotten the wrong horse out of the field (they're all brown). Our barn manager thought Ember was another horse named Amigo...which is a win for Ember and a loss for Amigo. Ember was really using her hind end today and I didn't have to ask her to come up under me every step it was just lovey. At the end we did some canter work and usually Ember's canter is an embarrassment, but we had two laps of left and right lead canter that was sublime. It definitely proves that she needs a lot of quality trot work before she goes into the canter. The transitions were really great on both departs and she normally comes back to a trot hideously and you have to go in a little circle or bring her to a walk to get her to rebalance but today she was great. I'd have taken her into a dressage test with this canter. Sometimes I ride Ember and I wonder if I look really stupid but I got a little validation for this ride so that was a good day.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Monday's ride was so good I thought today would be a repeat of that—it was not so. Ember was back to her usual self and tried to bite me. Ember usually protests the girth a little but today she was really upset about me just putting the saddle on and I think after so much time with this horse she wouldn't bite me out of bad behavior. My theory was right because it turns out her saddle wasn't fitting her well and the cantle was flipping up and her shoulders were getting pinched. This is the second time in the last 18 months that she's had to get a new saddle fitted and our instructors can relate this to her weight loss and fitness program. We switched her to a saddle that was narrower in the middle but didn't pinch her shoulder and she seemed happier in that. I think she thought it was a win that she didn't have to work for the first fifteen minutes of our training time while she was getting refitted, so she was a little bratty during our ride...including not standing at the mounting block. This ride was just ok, we had some good trot work, but the canter left much to be desired.

Week 5

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Celebration

This is my third lesson on Cele. She's a good horse. We practiced our tests again today and we did alright. Doing tests in a group lesson is not the most ideal because you only have time to do your test once. We did some extra walk trot canter around the ring while the other riders were going but with the arena set up there isn't much room to do any exercises. I'm still pitched forward and when I try no stirrup sit trot on Cele she tends to get really slow and, in my attempt, to put more leg on her I'm finding I'm turning my toes out. I'm not sure why I'm starting to have equitation issues, I was doing well in the spring when I was riding hunters. I think I've started to lose some of my flexibility and will probably have to start doing centered riding exercises outside of lessons to improve on this.

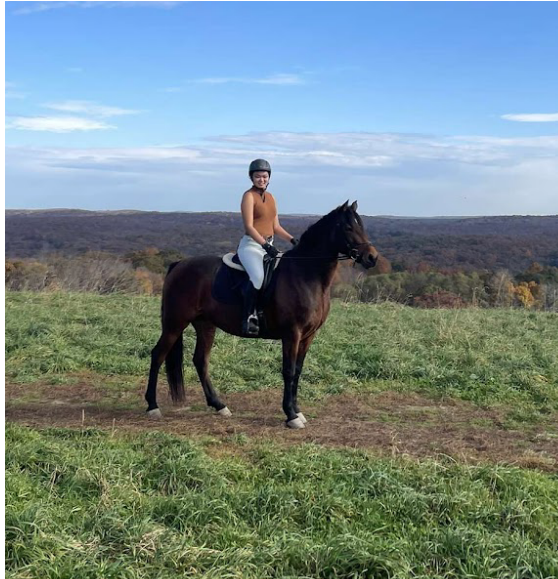
Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember was used in the jumping team show on Sunday and she was pooped. We only did walk, and trot and she was good. We did a lot of in hand work and didn't canter because she was being used in the jump lesson later the same day. Ember has a reputation for being too fast and difficult to slow down. It's not so much that she's taking off but she's so downhill it's like if you were running down a hill and the only way to make sure you don't fall is to keep running. Actually, when she's going around normally, she's really lazy and needs so much leg. I've ridden her a few times with a dressage whip to get her off my leg and she doesn't fly around; you just really need to tell her: "come back here and use this part of your body." I've started to hear some myths and Ember slander about her being a difficult horse and I don't think it's true. I think a lesson program is probably not the best job for her because she is happier with the same consistent rider every time. The barn manager is thinking of selling her. I honestly think Ember is a decent horse, she's not an easy ride but she had a lot of inconsistency in her early training. I'm not one of UConn's top advanced riders, but I think Ember and I get along because we work consistently every time and I try to ride her as if she were as perfect as Night Star. Attitude is very important with Ember because she can sense when a rider isn't thrilled to have drawn her and she'll take advantage of that.

I have been riding her in a dressage saddle this whole time because I think she goes better when someone really sits on her. I think the dressage fundamentals are good for Ember because she's so downward built. I think a future goal for Ember is to establish elasticity in her gait, we've recently been achieving great relaxation and I'm happy to see this improvement because she used to be so bit aggressive that she'd toss her head around constantly and it was a struggle to get her in a balanced frame. I've learned to exaggerate the release on my rein pressure when she gives and to put leg on when she lowers her poll and she's gotten great at coming into frame on the release.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Today was really warm and we took the training horses up horse barn hill. I was nervous that this would be an exciting ride because the last time I took Ember on a trail she was put in the back, and I almost came off. But Ember was put in the front of our group and was barely moving by the time we went trotting. The babies were up on the hill for the training fundamentals 1 class so there was a lot of talking and screaming between our 5-7 year olds and the yearlings. This was such an improvement in my own riding confidence from last year because I went from being afraid of not being a strong enough rider to take her on a trail to smacking her to stop eating the grass. LOL



You can see in the right photo how I'm pitched forward with my toe rotated out...yikes

Week 6

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Celebration

Cele and I are becoming very close pals. We did a lot of canter work today with transitions and serpentine exercises. Celebration is very good for group exercises, some of the younger horses struggle with canter serpentines but we did an exercise where we do a loop of trot, a loop of a canter, and a loop of trot. It's pretty good exercise and our trainer has us do this often. I used to do it when I rode Flyboy, and he was being especially lazy. Flyboy and I were able to adapt this exercise to add more loops and change where the canter transition would be. Sometimes he would get excited and so the serpentine with lead changes. I think this is a good exercise to try with Ember but the training class has seven horses in it and half of us ride and half of us lunge so there isn't enough room to do it.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember and I tried some pole work today. She was so lazy and kicked every single pole while we were going around. I really want her to have a good quality trot but when I ask her for a big forward trot in our warmup she always gets to be running on the forehand. We did not have any good canter work today. I think the poles are good for Ember, but I have to get her more warmed up before we go into them.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Ember and I did a lot of groundwork today because she's getting a terrible habit of taking off at the mounting block. I am good at getting on a moving horse, but I don't want her to learn this habit. I found out that another girl is riding her, and she has our instructor hold her while she mounts. We didn't do anything exciting today, mostly some no stirrup work at the walk and trot.

Week 7

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Celebration

This is the fifth week I've ridden Cele. We had a pretty good ride; we did a ground pole exercise. We were working on suppling the horses and getting them to bend. The exercise was a two-way tear drop that had poles on a curve and two changes in direction. This was a good exercise that I plan on using for Ember in the future. This past weekend was the Open House at Rhinebeck Equine, where I am an ambulatory technician. I built a "Scope-A-Horse," which is a life-sized quarter of a horse that shows what a horse looks like on the inside and has a clear tube for a gastroscope to slide down and you can see it go in. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to make a digestive tract, so it stopped at the pylorus—a miracle horse with no ulcers and no intestines.

That weekend I won a saddle pad from Rhinebeck Equine and took it to UConn.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember and I worked on bending and lateral suppleness. I know it's very basic and usually just part of warming up, but we spent most of the ride doing spiral ins and spiral outs around the arena and various modifications including spirals in and out on a figure eight. Ember was especially lazy today and had poor canter work. Some of the younger horses were being ridden and it was hard to keep to a geometric pattern because some of the three- and four-year-old trainees had other plans and kept running into us. I think I am hesitant to gun Ember into the canter because I want the transition to be really balanced so I bring her back to a medium trot, but I might be conditioning her to think running away is an option to avoid the canter. It's not the dressage way to sacrifice a balanced transition for the sake of getting the desired outcome but I'm having so much difficulty with the trot to canter transition I wonder if I should not just carry a whip and just get the canter and fix it the canter without coming back to the trot.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Ember and I did a lot of groundwork again today, there are usually less riders in the arena on Thursday than Monday, so I set up a pole course with the tear drop exercise I did in the dressage lesson on Monday. I like being able to work on what we learned in our lessons outside of lesson time, but there are not many opportunities to ride outside of lessons. Typically, the horses available to ride outside of lessons are project horses, young horses or are like Ember and the coaches try not to use them. I think Ember could be used in the advanced dressage lesson, but the dressage team tries to use our new thoroughbreds/ donated horses in the advanced lessons because they don't get used very often in the other teams or public lessons.

Ember was mild to moderate for this exercise. She would go into the poles slow and come out all strung out. It took a lot of half halting and I think it helped to ride her into the poles sitting and rise over the poles and ride out sitting. Since other riders used the poles, we couldn't do the tear drop exercise with the change in direction. When we ride in the training class, we try to all go the same direction at the same time since some of the younger horses don't steer very well.

At the end of the ride, I tried riding Ember out of the poles and immediately picking up the canter with the bend on a circle. I think my plan worked better in my head because I kept having to avoid running into other riders and I only got a good transition once. My complicated exercises don't work very well in an arena full of young horses. Ember is the Head Mare and is mean to the other horses so I have to keep her far away from anyone else because she'll back up into them to kick them or bite them (it hasn't happened with me, luckily).

Week 8

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Amigo

Amigo is a strange little boy. He tries very hard but has some kind of bone issue that doesn't make him lame but because of it he can't canter. (?) When I rode him, he was really good. Our practicum instructor told me he runs away when you ask for the canter and our team coach said he would probably not be able to do the canter serpentine exercise. He was fine for our lesson, he picked up the canter immediately and we were able to do two neat canter corners when we practiced our test. Little boy Amigo gets tired easily and was a sweaty mess at the end of the lesson. Amigo was started by one of UConn's best dressage riders, who has since graduated, and he has very strong dressage fundamentals—the rider who trains him in her independent study rides him in a hunt saddle in a light hunter seat and maybe that is why he was different for her than me. I like him but he has horrible ground manners. He's most likely going to be part of the sale class in the spring with Ember. They have students condition the horses for sale and do their pre-purchase exams.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember was being bratty today and tried to bite me. She has some subcutaneous seroma or fatty tumor of some sort on her back that you can palpate. She is sensitive to these spots, there are two along her T4-T5 region. The practicum instructor had me use a fluffy thin line on her and she seemed fine, but I took it easy on her. We did walk trot and groundwork, nothing exciting.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Ember still has the bumps along her back; the practicum instructor calls them a "pimple" and said she has had them before. They would inject them, but I the vet didn't think it was necessary and she doesn't get used enough for it to be a saddle-sore issue. She hasn't been lame since they came up, she just protests putting on the saddle pad and saddle. She was pretty good today, we did a short ride because UConn went to Equine Affaire and we had to get ready to leave for the Big E.

Week 9

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Gunther

This week was a bareback lesson. We ride with bareback pads and saddle pads. I haven't ridden Gunter before, but he is one of the holy trinity of UConn's best horses (Night Star, Statesman, Gunther). Gunther is a Friesen cross, and his tongue sticks out once he gets warmed up, but there's nothing wrong with him. He is a good boy and a bit bigger than Ember, getting on Ember bareback is a "one-two-three-hop" situation and getting on Gunther bareback was an embarrassment. At least I didn't fall off his other side—that happened to someone last year. Gunther is a treat but he has a lot of suspension in the trot, so this turned out to be a pelvic work out. Gunther has a weird suspicion about the painted doors with the UConn logo in the arena and during our canter exercises he's duck out or swing in to get away from them and that really teaches you that you stay on because of gravity and balance, not because you're holding on.

Gunther is also used almost every day in jumping and public lessons, so he's used to standing in the center of the arena and going out to canter around when it's his turn, so once he got

warmed up, I had to constantly prevent him from taking off at the canter. He has a very comfortable, lofty canter so it was easy to ride but not what I asked for. He is wider than Ember, and even though Ember is fat, I realized when I saw some pictures of myself just how turned out my toes are on him. That's probably only half because he's fat and half because I'm getting really locked in my hip, which is also causing my forward pitching. I am trying to do some hip flexors and yoga to loosen up.

Amigo's Fitness Program Monday

Ember was being used in the jumping lesson today, so I had the choice to ride Amigo or Princess (a polo pony). I picked Amigo because I'd just rode him the week before and I wanted to work on his canter. There were some straight poles set up, so we did some lovely trot work and then I wanted to work out the kinks in his canter. I think the coaches' concern is him not being strong enough to maintain a quality canter, but he was really good today. We did a lot of canter work where the depart came right after doing a line of poles. My dressage coach said he might not be able to go into the corners on a dressage test and I shouldn't try to push him into it so we just worked on a "squoval," which was straight lines and the corners were approximately a 10 meter circle. Amigo did very well, and I ended up cooling down early because he was a sweaty mess from all the cantering and had done a good job. I cooled him out bareback but when I got off my riding pants were all wet and sticky from him.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Week 10

Assigned UCDD lesson horse: Tesla

Tesla is a tattle tale, when you aren't riding well, she will just stop, she doesn't "just give it to you," like a school master might. There were some moments in our lesson that were absolute disasters, we were working on head to the wall leg yield and shoulder in and Tesla is prone to falling in on the shoulder so you really have to exaggerate your seat to stop the shoulder from collapsing, you also have to constantly half halt the outside on every step or she'll just turn into the middle of the arena and bend just her neck. She has a similar habit to Ember in which she'll get stuck in the trot to canter transition and charge around on her forehand. She is much heavier on her forehand than Ember is and it's very hard to keep myself upright on her, she needs constant support from the lower leg to bring the barrel up, but I think I over-visualize the bringing up and shorted my calf because I kept feeling my stirrup slide down my arch. This year I really have some equitation issues to work on.

Princess's Fitness Program Monday

Ember was used before and after my training time, so I rode Princess the polo pony today. She is a good egg. I watched the other people riding Ember, one more advanced than me and one less. It's very interesting to observe how another rider rides the horse you're working on so you can learn what to do or what not to do. The less experienced rider rode her in a hunt seat and had a very short rein on her and she was flipping her head throughout the whole ride. I don't think she cantered her because Ember was heavy and running on her forehand. The more advanced rider had a really strong lower leg and rode her with a crop. She was also jumping so it was hard to compare her to how I have been riding her.

Princess is a crooked old polo pony who isn't quick enough to keep up with the other thoroughbreds and is so small she could hide behind a tree. I am barely under her weight limit and she's a skinny red mare. She isn't red mare derogatory, she's very sweet and tries very hard. When she turns, she's like a bus and her whole body moves as one solid unit. I tried some neck stretches on her before I got on, once she warms up, the better she is at isolating her front end from her hind end, but being a fluid dressage horse is not in her future. She mostly needs occasional walk trot canter exercise to help her build muscle. She has her own little motor but is definitely very crooked and it helps to ride with your hands a little higher to make her happy.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

Ember and I did some pole work today, she was barely moving so we did lots of walk to trot warm transitions to warm up. My goal is to get a quality trot out of pole work and then pick up a canter. Ember does not have this goal. She was really stiff, so I let her to some big stretchy trot loops to try and help her get loose and ended up giving up on the trot poles and spent the day working on her flexibility and getting her to soften her back.

Week 11

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Amigo

Amigo was on adequan for a few weeks earlier in the semester and was doing great but has been off it for the last couple weeks. I was warned Amigo was a little off recently because of it and he certainly gave me a different ride today than the last time I rode him in a lesson. He's Shabazz's full brother and has many of his nasty pony camp tricks and today I really had to ride the outside of him because he kept trying to drift into the center of the arena. He tries very hard but was having some trouble in the canter. He needs a lot of support for canter transitions; we did an exercise with a three-loop serpentine, and the middle loop is canter, and I felt my loops get smaller and smaller. I think I anticipate him running through the transition before he does, and I try to gun him into it. Overall, the lesson had good walk and trot work, if I ride Amigo again, I think I'll use a dressage whip to practice sharper aids with a distinct ask and release (no gunning).

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember and I did a lot of groundwork today. She was in some kind of mood, so we spent a lot of time working in hand and I really want to be able to work on her flexibility on the ground. I was trying to work on in hand leg yield at the walk, but I have a terrible time stopping her from either drifting away and losing her or having her lose forward momentum. I've seen this exercise done in videos and in training books and I only got a couple good steps in. I give Ember a lot of praise when she does something correct and then let her do something else to give her mind a break. We did a little mounted work and had some terrible canter work. We had one very good transition but immediately lost the canter. My trainer says Ember isn't moving forward enough but I'm feeling that she's running. Ember has an awkward gait scale that is either running and completely unbalanced or lazy. The riders who don't like Ember say she's too fast and you can't stop her but I'm starting to realize a good canter is "faster" than you think. It's not even fast, but a balanced canter is more forward and needs so much more leg. After our canter, we couldn't get a good trot back and I had to fight to keep her in self carriage. I really want to nail this trot to canter work.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

I had a presentation today for my class, so I did not work Ember today. Ember was probably glad of it.

Week 12

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Tesla

Tesla is a good egg. We worked on prix caprilli today and I love jumping. We got a little held up because one rider didn't come and there was some horse switching going on, so we had a shorter lesson. Tesla is such a good jumper and even though we were jumping tiny little things I rode with a slightly shorter stirrup in the dressage saddle, and I think it helped with my lower leg. I spent a lot of time in the Spring riding in no stirrups for the hunt team at Marist that I forgot how good two point is for stretching the leg. I love doing no stirrup work, but I think I need to do some short stirrup work to not lose my leg strength. Because the dressage ring was set up for jumps, there was not much space to work when we weren't going through the course, but Tesla is good with lateral work, so we did that in between our jump rounds. I would love to do more prix caprilli.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

I really tried to get a good canter transition out of Ember. I had her going on the lunge and from the ground you can see just how downhill she is built and how much she leans when cantering on a circle. Some of that is not her fault, it's just her confirmation. I wish I could see a video of myself on her because sometimes I see pictures of me on Ember bareback and I realize how uneven my legs are and I wonder how much of that is her and how much of that is me. I think I sometimes try to overcorrect on canter circles by putting so much weight on my outside stirrup I lose my inside leg contact and that makes her fall in more. I got on and we did some no stirrup work and then some canter. We had a pretty good canter going to the left. I rode her with a dressage whip today. I think it makes a big difference.

Ember's Fitness Program Thursday

I was selling my dinosaurs for HuskyTHON so I did not ride Ember today.

Extra Week

Assigned UCDT lesson horse: Amigo

This was a makeup lesson for week 3. We did a bareback lesson and spent a lot of time working on the walk. I rode Amigo with a whip today and he was pretty good. He has the most comfortable trot to sit bareback and was more comfortable than Gunther at the trot. His canter left something to be desired and I almost came off at one point which was my fault, not his. He tries so hard, and I can tell he knows what to do. Amigo is probably going to be in the sale program, I think he will make a great intro dressage pony.

Ember's Fitness Program Monday

Ember and I did a lot of two point at the trot all around the ring several laps. I'm sure she was confused because I ride her so often in the sit trot. I could feel my calves burning a little, but it

was probably good to engage some of those forgotten muscles. It also helps me with keeping my heels down. Today was just me and another rider since it is finals week, so I had the whole arena to work on whatever I wanted. The girl who was riding with me is an advanced rider and suggested that I have Ember going at a big, busting trot to get into the canter and not be afraid of her running, I think the word she said was to “just commit to it.” This is true, when I feel Ember is charging away and tripping, I bring her back to a medium sit trot or even a walk to regroup and she probably thinks this is a great way to get out of doing work. I picked up a dressage whip and we got a robust trot going and finally got a decent canter. It was not perfect, and I think the transition needs work but the quality of the gait itself was better and I must not fear fixing the gait without down transitioning. If I get to ride Ember next semester, our plan is to work on self-carriage in the canter and not be afraid to sacrifice accuracy for obedience.