

Marley McCourt

### March Clinic with Felicitas von Neumann-Cosel

On March 24 and 24, 2023, I had the opportunity to participate in a clinic with Felicitas von Neumann-Cosel at Bailey Ridge Farms on my horse, Hide, whom I have recently acquired through the Dressage4Kids Horse Donation program. Felicitas is well known for her classical dressage principles, creative and effective strategies, beautiful position, and knowledge of biomechanics. Felicitas was also Hide's previous trainer before I had him, so it was an excellent opportunity to check in on his training progress. I am incredibly grateful for receiving a scholarship from ESDCTA and Dressage4Kids which allowed me this very educational opportunity!



On the first day of the clinic, Hide was a bit tense being off-property. Felicitas showed me a very intriguing way of how to calm him from the ground; by applying a light pressure downwards with the reins while holding onto the horse's shoulder blade. This allows it so that the horse has to pay attention to you while being in a position where he is calm and you have control, without constantly having to be pulling on his mouth. Our warm-up was very focused on the walk's regularity and tempo; not pushing the walk but keeping him in front of my leg. Another main focus was Hide's self-carriage and for me to give and push him into my hands so that I am not affecting his flow, this applies to all gaits.

Once we were warmed up we did an exercise in the trot and canter that I thought was incredibly helpful and effective. On an eighteen-meter circle, to create the haunches in, we had to bend from the inside leg at his shoulder, then while keeping the bend and the haunches on the eighteen-meter circle, move the shoulders out onto a nineteen-meter circle. This exercise allowed him to keep the expression in the trot and canter by also freeing up his shoulders. Another exercise I enjoyed in the trot was rising for two or three strides before sitting back down, which tested my balance. Felicitas used the example of pulling back a spring before releasing, as we want a bigger trot, so rising for two or three strides, rebalancing, before allowing the spring in the trot.



On the second day, Hide was already much more relaxed from the start. Felicitas had me start off walking with the Green “Moons” Franklin balls placed under my seat bones, this was to help me feel the circular motion/rhythm of the walk. It was helpful to feel the motion of the walk pirouettes and walk half passes with the balls. An exercise we did in the walk was to start with a walk half pass, from quarter line to quarter line, and at the end of the half pass, move into a walk pirouette. Felicitas described how the walk should not have to change, the turn comes from the seat, and it starts with the inside front leg reaching. After feeling the circular motion in the walk, she put me in the PR Equiformance Postures slings. The slings cross from the bottom of the rider’s foot to the opposite shoulder. Doing the half passes in the rising trot in the bands allowed

me to feel how turning my shoulders in the direction we wanted to go allowed room for more expression and freedom in the trot.

Without the scholarships earned from Dressage4Kids and ESDCTA, I would have not

had the opportunity to attend this clinic.

Many thanks to

so many special people who made this opportunity happen; Olivia Steidle for organizing a wonderful clinic, Bailey Ridge Farms for hosting on your beautiful property, Debbie DelGiorno for the amazing photos taken, Felicitas von Neumann-Cosel for

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