

Daniel Stewart Equestrian Athlete Training Camp : August 4-7, 2026

It's 6 a.m. Your alarm is ringing in your ear, the fluorescent dorm lights shine bright in your eyes as you roll over to silence your pestering phone. Sore, tired, and bleary-eyed, you and your equally exhausted roommate get ready for the morning workout. Joining the other athletes just outside of your rooms, you all walk to the gym through the morning fog, sympathising and relating over your wobbly legs and tight backs; but nonetheless eager for the day to get started. As you begin your first workout, your coaches hype you up. "Never ask anything of your horse that you are not willing to ask of yourself!" one of them shouts. "You ask your horse to get out and work hard when he doesn't feel like it, you get out and work when you don't feel like it! You ask your horse to eat healthy, you eat healthy! You ask your horse to hydrate, you hydrate! You are as much an athlete as your horse!"

This is what your mornings look like as an athlete attending Daniel Stewart's Equestrian Athlete Training Camp. This camp was one of the most unique, transformative, and inspiring experiences of my equestrian career. It expanded my perspective on life – not just as an equestrian, but as an athlete.

Every day for four days, the clinic consisted of three 1.5 hour workouts, interactive lectures on nutrition, injury prevention/care, and rider psychology. There was always a constant atmosphere of motivation and accomplishment. Despite expecting that we would be unbearably sore and tired, Daniel Stewart's continuous encouraging words gave my peers and me the motivation to continue giving 110% effort every day.

Hosted at the Chula Vista Elite Athlete Olympic Training Center in San Diego, CA, the campus truly brought focus to the whole experience. From the numerous training fields, to the track, tennis courts, BMX course, field complex, and the many gyms where we could always find real Olympic and Paralympic athletes training; it all made me feel as if I belonged there, proving that equestrians are true athletes.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to complete this camp alongside 22 other equestrians from a variety of disciplines, and under the guidance of five of the most motivating and empowering coaches I have ever worked with. Each coach specialized in fitness, nutrition, rider psychology, or injury care/prevention, and they are the biggest reasons I learned so much from this camp.

The Workouts

The workouts were some of the most strenuous and exhausting exercises I have ever done. We did exercises such as wind sprints, sit ups, planks, speed rope, agility ladders, neuro balls, and so much more. My favorite exercises were the stairs we did each morning. As a team, we worked to complete 25,000 stairs by the end of the camp, counting how many flights we did in five minute increments. By the last day we surpassed our goal to reach just under 27,000 stairs, working out to approximately 1,300 stairs each! This was by far the most strenuous but most enjoyable exercise because we all had to work together as a team to reach our goal. Despite being incredibly stiff and sore by the end, the workouts were extremely fun, you could feel yourself becoming stronger and tougher, and we all learned how to become more resilient by working through the pain.

The Lessons

In our workshop sessions, we learned how we can care for ourselves so we then can show up in our sport with focus. The coaches taught us everything from balancing our meals, to KT taping our joints. But by far the most eye-opening lessons for me were the lectures on limiting beliefs and mental biases. We learned how, as athletes that compete in a sport with so many variables and infinite outcomes, we need to “Write our own stories”, meaning that how we choose to narrate our story is what ultimately gives our lives meaning. The words we say to ourselves affect how we behave. If we can control our thoughts, we can influence our futures. Basically, our mindsets determine our skill sets!

Along with learning about mindset changes came the most important lesson of the camp: We ask our horses to exercise, condition, be athletic, and give us their all; so as their partners, why shouldn't we? Riding horses requires a connection between the horse and rider, we each need to put in our best efforts, and overall we work together as equals. This then means that we as riders should not ask our horses to do anything we are not prepared to do as well. As Daniel Stewart reminded us countless times, “You are as much of an athlete as your horse”.

Looking back on my experience, I would encourage any and all equestrians to attend this camp. It truly opened my eyes to new angles on our sport, and gave me new tools I can use to improve my own performance so I can show up better for my horse. I now have a new perspective on each of my rides. Because of the EATC Camp, I am able to adjust my mindset, make goals, have a positive attitude, write my own story, and overall become a better athlete.

Lastly, thank you Dressage4Kids for providing me with a scholarship to attend this camp. Without it I wouldn't have been able to attend, I am incredibly grateful! Below is a collection of photos from the camp and a few of my favorite quotes from our lessons with the coaches.

Daniel Stewart

**EQUESTRIAN
ATHLETE
TRAINING CAMP**



"NEVER LET
YOUR ICE
CREAM MELT
WHILE YOU'RE
WORRYING
ABOUT
SOMEONE ELSE'S
SPRINKLES"



"IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO FAIL AT SOMETHING
HARD THAN BE GOOD AT SOMETHING EASY"



"YOU CAN EITHER ADD FUEL
OR REMOVE FRICTION"

