



## Taking Training into the Show Ring: Young Riders Apply What They've Learned

Day Five of the Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic

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*Mattie Zepernick and Leandro*

**Wellington, FL- January, 7, 2015** - Day five of the Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic was the culmination of all the hard work the riders had been putting in over the last four days. The riders rode a test appropriate to their level with either FEI 4\* Judge Janet Foy or Assistant USEF Youth Dressage Coach and judge Charlotte Bredahl-Baker commenting on their performance.

"Today's help was a different kind of help," Robert Dover explained. "It's the kind of help that makes showmen out of them as opposed to just good riders and trainers, because those are different arts to a certain degree. So I think it's really important that they have today as well, to finish out their week."

Foy agreed: "I think you need to be able to understand how you take your training into the show ring and how your good training improves your showing."



*Ashleigh Conroy-Zugel and Ungaro*

Foy's lecture to the students yesterday likely influenced the way many of them rode the test today. In her lecture, she went over commonly made mistakes in tests at each level.

"I think overall I would say they need to use their corners better," Foy said. "I think they need to think about how they prepare their horses for the movements and how they finish them."

Foy's lecture yesterday influenced rider Mattie Zepernick, who rode a Third Level test in front of Foy on a borrowed horse, to really think more about each aspect of her ride. Zepernick's partner for the week was Leandro, an 11-year-old Westphalian gelding generously provided by owner Rebecca Reno.



*Mattie Zepernick and Leandro*

"Her talk yesterday definitely helped me today," Zepernick said. "She talked about going into my corners a lot and she talked about me preparing a lot. That's a little bit what she talked about yesterday as well as during my ride, so that helped me a lot and that influenced my ride."

Overall, Zepernick thought her test went well with Leandro. Despite the horse being tired from the previous four days of intensive training, Foy worked with Zepernick to get him moving more forward and expressively.

"He wasn't particularly interested in doing the test today. He would rather be watching football with a cigar and a smoking jacket!" Foy exclaimed.

Both in the previous day's lecture and the test rides today, Foy stressed the importance of riding through your mistakes. She told the students to not just shut the horse down after making a mistake.



*Mallory Kent and Okidokie*

"When your horse makes a mistake, don't stop," she explained. "Think: what was the problem and how can I teach him something from his mistake? Every mistake can be a training opportunity."

Kalie Beckers, 19, of Loranger, Louisiana, also got some valuable takeaways from her test ride with Charlotte Bredahl-Baker. Beckers rode her 22-year-old Swedish Warmblood stallion, Carush, through the Under 25 Grand Prix test with Bredahl-Baker commentating.

Beckers said thoroughness was something she was told by Bredahl-Baker to work on.



*Kalie Beckers and Carush*

"In all the upper level movements, he braces to do them," Beckers explained. "He lifts his neck up and then he can't use his back and he gets stuck in the piaffe and passage and the one-tempis. He just gets stuck because he braces his neck and he's not going all the way through his back."

The Robert Dover Horsemanship Clinic is sponsored in part by Lendon Gray's Dressage4Kids, and Gray commented that it is really wonderful to watch these kids grow, not only in the five days of the clinic, but also from year to year.

"Whenever you do clinics, you hope there's a long term success to it," Gray said. "It's really fun to see those who have come back for several years to see the process is really working."

Dressage4Kids offers programs, scholarships and support for riders under 21 and has hosted the Youth Dressage Festival since 1999. Laura Graves, who taught at this year's Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic, rode at the first Youth Dressage Festival.



*Bronwyn Cordiak and Amor Amor*

"To have sort of started her dressage career there and now to have really gone full circle, from doing the World Equestrian Games successfully, to now teaching the young riders that are in the Dressage4Kids program, that's fun," said Gray.

Dover agreed: "It's just amazing how the improvement has been of those who have been participating year after year and the new ones who have come in as well."

Both Beckers and Zepernick were very appreciative of their time at the clinic.



*Ashleigh Conroy-Zugel and Ungaro*

"It was amazing," Zepernick said. "I rode with four different trainers and they all focused on the movements and they all had the general same thing they focused on. It was really intense, but I was really glad to do it!"

Beckers echoed Zepernick and said, "It's an amazing opportunity and I would definitely do it again as much as I can. To have five lessons with those people - you can't find an opportunity like that anywhere else. It's great."

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