



In Stride w/ Coventry Report #72
Monday & Tuesday horses out...

Interview with Kristin in the Tribune Review
They came, they interviewed me for two hours. And, the result of the two hours is below. If you cannot open the link for some reason, I can email you the article.

http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/tribpm/s_568455.html

Horse show at Coventry May 25th
We came, we showed, it was a beautiful day and all had a grand experience.
But now do you wonder what it was you did? Here are Memorial Reflections



Perfect footing prior to show beginning 7 am

We entered at A, there was a judge at the other end of A at C and we rode symmetrical figures and straight lines on our horses. Most of the times the tests mirrored themselves. If you did a circle left then you did one to the right. In essence, the judge was evaluating how well you ride, train and maneuver the horse. Most of us rode at Walk Trot and a few did Training Level which includes the walk, trot and canter. In brief, the rider paid for the judges opinion on how well he or she preformed with the horse. For most of us it was the beginning of a learning experience.

And what better place than to start at Coventry. Those of you who want to pursue this the next schooling show is at Sonador June 29th, and then a bigger schooling school at Horse on Course in Sax-onburg June 15th.

In the past, I have included what those marks mean in the show program, but here they are. As you noticed when you got your test sheet each movement you did was evaluated or judged, see below.



Show prep, braiding with a smile.
Horse is sleeping, usually a good sign

- 10 Excellent
- 9 Very good
- 8 Good
- 7 Fairly good
- 6 Satisfactory
- 5 Sufficient
- 4 Insufficient
- 3 Fairly bad
- 2 Bad
- 1 Very Bad
- 0 Not executed

The USDF Connections (see more about this publication below) in the May 2008 edition describes some of the scores as follows -- "A score of 5 ("sufficient") indicates that the quality was marginal. A 6 or 7 says that the basics and the criteria for the movement appear to be on the right track. An 8, 9, or 10 rewards extra quality on the top of well-fulfilled criteria." However, please remember that when you show you are just paying for this judges opinion of your riding and it is okay to not agree with the judge but once they have ruled...well, there is no appeal.

Not only is each movement judged but at the bottom of the test there are more considerations called coefficients Coefficients are where the judge evaluates your horses gaits, if it was obedient and submissive plus your position. In this section you are being evaluated on the general

look of the two of you performing each movement. If your horse is submissive it will understand your aids, if your position is good you will better be able to communicate to your horse. Your position consists of your three natural aids, seat legs and hands, ...it all works together horse with rider, rider with horse. Riding is a continuum of muscles intricately communicating back and forth. At least, that is what it is suppose to be...:)



Intently warming up prior to the show

Notice on your tests that these collective remarks are either times 2 or 3, as were some of the movements in the test. I am sure you recall me saying the walk is always double points. That is what we mean by double points, the score is doubled. Usually, as you move up the levels, the new movements are double points such as leg yielding in 1st Level a movement which is not done in Training Level, but introduced at First.



Get ready get set, go.... Sarah and a student about to enter at A. Any, last minute advice?

The walk is always double points because most riders destroy the walk by trying to hand ride on the

horse's mouth to get it submissive. As I say, don't squash the walk. Then again, getting a horse on the aids requires all three natural aids to work in unison.

There are so many ironies in this sport that it could bust your head with frustration. So it takes a unique person to pursue the art of riding and, dressage in particular. As we have heard over and over, dressage simply means training, or more specifically the gymnastic training of a horse. In order to even attempt to ride we ourselves would be better off to get gymnastically trained too, but that is a whole other aspect of unifying humans with horses and horses with humans.



Getting the judges opinion after you ride the test

Back to showing. The pursuit of showing dressage and having the judge evaluate you, hopefully, moves you forward through the progression of the test levels. These test levels display where you and your horse are training within each level. Riders usually start out at Walk Trot and learn how to ride a horse's natural gaits and then show in the Introductory Levels - Walk Trot. Then the canter is added in Training Level.



Waiting in the wings.

After a rider can harness and display the horse's three natural gaits at Training Level, the foundation of dressage, and has the horse submissive, with the rider non interfering with the gaits or movement and riding perfect geometrical figures in the dressage arena, a large rectangle, then we have arrived. Successfully ringing Training Level is the hardest part of unifying horse and rider. However, once a rider achieve these basics she or he can then build on that foundation and move into First Level on up to 2nd, 3rd and 4th Levels....



Natalie and Andy (Perpetual Endeavor) displaying a nice walk in a Walk Trot class with submission and positioning right. She is sitting nicely, oops is that "puppy paws" or "piano hands" I see there?

Once achieving the basics and displaying the horse's gaits unconstrained then the rider starts doing all kinds of gymnastic movements with the horse that shift the horse's weight forward and back, yet keeping it in balance,... both longitudinally and laterally.. With that achievement (1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th levels) the rider can move onto Prix St. Georg, Intermediare then onto the pinnacle of dressage which is called Grand Prix and the Olympic level. Phew. They say it takes 7 years to do that. But, first you must know how to ride, have a horse that can do it that has a sound mind, good conformation not go lame and be an athlete. The rider must be in some kind of shape her self, be able to get the horse on the aids

(Training Level) know how to ride a half halt, be able to send a horse forward and back, up and down, stretch and contract both longitudinally and laterally, know the diagonal aids, apply the aids in perfect timing shall I go on??

Remember it is all part of the process! The lucky dressage rider can go to Europe and buy horses already made for this. They can also pay trainers to keep the horses training up to standard. And then, there is us who pursue this sport with our "normal" equines, that simple say, "here I am, welcome onto my back. Do you have any carrots in that back pocket?"



Here is Heather and Arielle stretching longitudinally. This stretching not only develops the horse back, creating a supple top line, that carries the rider, it also connects the back with the front of the horse. Nice form from both horse and human...

The United States Dressage Foundation, the national umbrella group that oversees our obsession, in the May '08 edition of USDF Connection (p. 49/50) describes training like this..

"Balance, not "frame." Dressage teaches the horse to balance himself longitudinally (from nose to tail) and laterally (from left to right). At Training Level, he should be in a level balanced, forehead to hindquarters. As he progresses in his dressage training, he develops "uphill balance" -- the strength and ability to shift additional weight onto his haunches, thereby freeing and elevating his forehead (in other words collection). First Level does not require collection, and an uphill balance is not required but the judges want to see the First Level horse "working toward uphill balance,...balance is developed through correct gymnastic training...."

And, why all this training. Well a horse carries most of his weight on the forehead. So when you add a rider you have just doubled loaded its front end weight. So through gymnastic training the horse learns to carry the weight more toward the hind end. A rider can only learn to recycle this forward weight toward the back end of the horse with gymnastic exercises, the knowledgeable use of the half halt and, all only after being able to get the horse submissive and round, to be on the aids so the horse can respond to these cues in order to do gymnastic training. It goes full circle rider to horse horse to rider.

Without rambling any more if you have any questions just ask. The illusive pursuit of riding, dressage in particular, need I say more. Happy Riding and remember to look, or peek between your horse's ears.



**Thank you
all volunteers
at the show**

USDF Connections - Did you ever wonder why they call it Connection - cause we as riders are suppose are to connect our horses front to back, the USDF is connecting to us readers, and us readers are then suppose to be able to connect to our horses.

<http://www.theanimalrescuesite.com>

"Old minds are like horses; you must exercise them if you wish to keep them in working order." --John Adams



Young minds trying to figure out how to control a four legged horse with a mind of its own. Pee Wee Class at Coventry. Is that grass down there?



Sport horse class at the Coventry Show. trotting a 3 year old Friesian to display his gaits

Congratulations to Heather and Arielle for winning Hi Point at the show with a 69%.

Special Olympics

The first week of June the Coventry caravan is taking two riders to Penn State for the Special Olympic summer games. This is very exciting. Our concession stand was for Special Olympics and we made about two hundred dollars. well, that will be one tank of gas, actually two tanks... Thank you very much for supporting this cause. **Donations are continually being accepted to fund this program.**

