

IMPULSION



2024 Event Calendar

Youth Clinic Updates

KDA Early Spring Show

Helpful Riding Tips

Dinah Babcock Clinic

The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Dressage Association

Spring 2024

Lisa Michelle
PHOTOGRAPHY

Upcoming KDA Events

May 24-5, 2024 KDA Spring Warmup Show

Kentucky Horse Park (Rolex Arena)
Lexington, KY

May 26, 2024 KDA 37th Dressage Show

Kentucky Horse Park (Rolex Arena)
Lexington, KY

June 1-2, 2024 Melissa Allen Clinic

Alta Vista Farm
Goshen, KY

June 15-16, 2024 KDA WDAA Lite Show

Kentucky Horse Park (Dressage Complex)
Lexington, KY

June 15, 2024 HAL Combined Test and Dressage

Masterson Station Park
Lexington, KY

June 22-23, 2024 Lilo Fore Riding Clinic

Touchstone Farm
Lexington, KY

July 20-1, 2024 KDA Summer Classic I&II

Kentucky Horse Park (Rolex Arena)
Lexington, KY

July 27, 2024 HAL Combined Test and Dressage

Masterson Station Park
Lexington, KY

August 17, 2024 KDA Annual Schooling Show

Masterson Station Park
Lexington, KY

September 12-15, 2024:

1. Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 2 Championships
2. KDA Fall Classic I

Kentucky Horse Park
Lexington, KY

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*On the Cover: Leigh Ryall, photographed
by Lisa Michelle Dean Photography*

“Jenn-erosity” for Young Riders

By: Julia Magsam

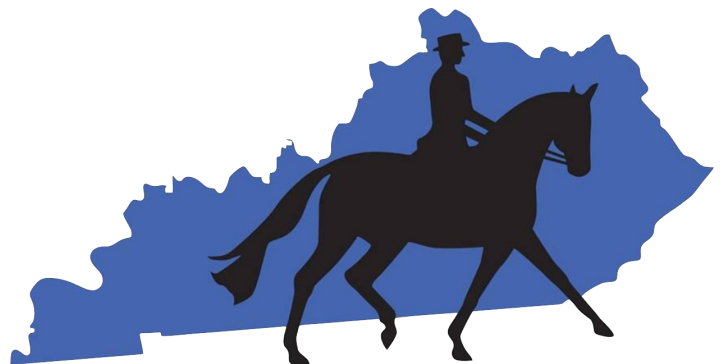
If there is one thing that can be said about the Kentucky Dressage Association, it is that they have the best volunteers. Among these volunteers, there is a large base of dedicated youth. Although most youth volunteers are not old enough to drive, they are quite driven.

Because KDA young riders are so dedicated to their community, KDA has rewarded their volunteerism with free clinics from other, more advanced KDA members. The equally generous community of KDA trainers have donated their time and facilities to foster the growth of the future of the dressage sport.

February at Alta Vista Farm, long time KDA member Jenn Boblitt volunteered to teach seven KDA young riders. From introductory level to first level, all of the young riders demonstrated grit and ambition. With show season approaching, many riders worked on improving their dressage tests.

Jenn made exercises focused on improving geometry for some and improving quality of gait for others. Stiff horses became round, and feisty ponies became well-behaved (in feisty pony terms, of course). Two riders — Arlena Worm and Addison Mosley — rode beautifully in their practice tests. In the end, every young rider left with a smile and only a few frozen toes.

For those interested in participating in the next youth clinic, youth membership is still open! Look out for informational posts on the KDA Facebook group and be sure to volunteer at least four hours before signing up for a clinic.



“Jenn-erosity” for Young Riders

By: Julia Magsam



Top Left: Jenn Boblitt and Arlena Worm

Top Right: Jenn Boblitt and Ryleigh Jones

Bottom Left: Jenn Boblitt and Annelise Tonn

All photography taken and submitted by Julia Magsam.

Tips for Attempting a Lower-Level Pas de Deux

By: Catherine Donworth



In 2023, my friend Heather and I decided to try a pas de deux at one of the KDA recognized shows. We got the idea to attempt a pas de deux while looking at old pictures. We had a Christmas fun show at our boarding farm — Lucky Dog Eventing — and we had a great time. When we looked at the photos from that day, our horses' stride lengths were so identical that only one horse could be seen in photos taken from the side.

Heather and I both needed a project to focus on through the winter, so we took the idea of a pas de deux and ran with it. It also helped that we had an excellent friend with ample experience in editing music, and we managed to coerce her to help us.

To attempt a pas de deux, it is very helpful if one of the riders has some experience with freestyle riding. A lot of the same principles apply, such as picking music that enhances the gaits of the horses, having some kind of theme running through the different music pieces, and having smooth transitions between different elements of the routine.

I would highly recommend attempting a pas de deux to anyone. It sounds daunting, and it is definitely difficult, but it is so much fun. It is also nice to be on the struggle bus with company.

From my personal experience, here are some nuggets of wisdom I would pass on to anyone wanting to give a pas de deux a try. As a disclaimer, I am an adult amateur with no real qualifications to dispense advice other than my single pas de deux attempt.

- Riders should pick two horses that have a very similar stride length and rhythm. For Heather and me, our horses are not close to the same color: my horse is a dun, and Heather's horse is a dapple gray. However, the horses are about the same height and have the same stride length.
- Riders should start training for the pas de deux a long time before they perform it at a show. I would recommend a minimum of 2 months, preferably more.
- Riders should pick music they both like since they will be listening to it many times. Riders should listen to the music over and over, to the point where they know it inside out.

Attempting a Lower-Level Pas de Deux Con.

- Riders should start by hacking out together, walking side by side, and gradually getting closer together so the horses get used to the whole idea. It is an adjustment for most horses to ride close to another horse, and riders need to give them time to get used to passing close and riding very close to each other.
- Once riders have designed the choreography, spend time walking the pattern together in the ring and talking through it. Heather and I did this every single practice as our warm-up, and it was a great way to start a training session.
- If possible, riders should have a set practice day at least once a week. It is nice to have a set day to look forward to, especially if riders enjoy an adult beverage after.
- Riders should not be rigid with the choreography. If something does not work for one of the riders, change it.
- Pick a level that both riders are comfortable at, which is often well below what riders are schooling and showing as an individual. A pas de deux is supposed to be fun, and riding with a partner complicates things. The last thing riders want to be worried about is their horses' abilities to do the movements.
- Riders should have one person be the 'caller' when they practice. For example, one partner could say out loud things like "turn now," "3,2,1 halt," etc. I will admit to talking to Heather during our test at the show, and we were not penalized. However, the rules might say different.
- When riders are practicing their routine, identify any trouble spots (e.g., areas where one rider gets a bit behind or ahead). Then, riders should talk through some back-up plans they can have in place just in case something happens on the show day.
- When riding the test, riders should look at each other as much as they can. The pas de deux is a team skill — it is much more than two people riding at the same time. Riders need to be watching their partner, constantly making little adjustments so that they stay synchronized.
- Riders should read the judges' sheet. Pas de deux is scored very differently than a normal dressage test. Individual movements are not scored; rather, judges score a combination of overall technical and artistic marks.

Attempting a Lower-Level Pas de Deux Con.

- As a general tip, there are required movements and “allowed” movements at each level. They are listed on the USDF website and the judges’ sheet. Look at the USDF website — there is a whole section for pas de deux. Also, if riders do not see the class listed on the prize list, they can ask the show organizers. I did when Heather and I competed, and the lovely KDA people added it to the prize list for us.

I will definitely do another pas de deux in the future, and I encourage any rider to give it a try!

Images of Catherine Donworth and her friend Heather performing a pas de deux. Images taken by Lisa Michelle Dean photography.



KDA Early Spring Show



Susan Machin and Butterfly Encounter



Laura Burket and Handsome Dancer



Leigh Ryall and Air Paynter



Heidi Jones and Karen Taylor



Jody Swimmer and Hart's Divine Memories



Amanda Richard and Andy Po Po



April McClain and Equibest Sine Metu G

All photography provided by Lisa Michelle Dean Photography: lisamichelledeanphotography.shootproof.com/

KDA Early Spring Show



Sara Geisinger and Josie Sandra TF



Kimberly Moore and The Luckdragon



Linda Betts and He's Rising



Kelsey Lee and Tiptoe in the Tulips



Carol Weber and Spring Hollow Lady Grace



Jenn Boblitt and Santana Vanna

All photography provided by Lisa Michelle Dean Photography: lisamichelledeanphotography.shootproof.com/

Horse Squats: Building A Horse's Hind End Muscles and Creating Power

By: Jenn Boblitt

As an instructor, I often see horses that can maintain a consistent frame in their gait, but they lose their frame when they try to do a transition. This is a common problem in the lower levels, and I often see it in advanced horses too.

Many riders have heard the mantra “transitions, transitions, transitions,” but riders might not understand how important transitions really are. A well-ridden transition builds correct muscle and creates carrying and pushing power in a horse. And what better way to create lower-body strength than with horse squats?

At the training level, once a horse can maintain a proper connection, steady tempo, and willingness to go forward at the walk, trot, and canter, it is ready to work on transitions. I like to start with simple trot-walk-trot transitions. Establish a forward, connected trot where the horse is seeking the contact and willing to go into a stretchy trot at any moment. From this feeling, a rider can sink into the sitting trot and ask for the walk transition. The horse will most likely brace its back when the rider asks for the downward transition. It is the rider's job to help it overcome this instinct.

To prompt the downward transition, the rider wants to keep their leg on to maintain impulsion so that the horse's hind legs step under itself (i.e., sink down into a squat). While maintaining driving aids, the rider might have to encourage the horse to supple through the neck by asking for a little more bend to the inside while maintaining a firm contact on the outside rein. The goal is for the horse to stretch into the hand while transitioning to the walk and maintain pushing power from behind. It should feel effortless. After a few relaxed walk steps, it is time for the upward transition (i.e., lifting out of the squat).

Riders should prepare for the upward transition by asking for a half-halt to make sure the horse is still on its hind end. Then, they should ask for the horse to stretch into their hand while aiding for the trot. The goal is to have the horse go from a relaxed energetic walk to a forward trot, without any shuffling, all while maintaining the desire to stretch into the rider's hand. It sounds so easy, right?

Once the simple transitions become reliable, it is time to move on to the more advanced “squat”: the trot-halt-trot transition. This set of transitions really helps to build hind end muscle, and they are very helpful in the development of

Horse Squats: Building A Horse's Hind End Muscles and Creating Power

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thrust (which is necessary for lengthenings). To start the transition, riders should establish a working trot then apply a half-halt to balance the horse on its hind end. Once the rider feels their horse collect, they should apply the halt aid (brace their back, squeeze their thighs together, and apply a steady contact on the reins).

Riders will likely have to supple their horse if it tries to hollow its back and raise its head instead of rounding its back and increasing the flexion in the joints of its hind legs. Riders need to keep their lower leg on gently so that the horse remains forward thinking in the halt. Oftentimes, if they take their leg off, their horse will want to back up.

After establishing the halt and making sure the horse is patiently waiting for the forward aid, ask for the trot transition. Riders want to make sure their horse does not take any walk steps, as that would be “cheating” and making the exercise easier. Riders might have to give a sharper aid with their leg the first few times they start schooling the halt-trot transition. The idea here is for the horse to lift into the trot smoothly without any walk steps.

The halt is often under-schooled and therefore poorly ridden in tests. There are at least two halts in every dressage test, so practice them regularly. They are a

great tool for building muscle and will improve a horse's pushing and carrying power.

As a horse progresses up the levels, riders can work on canter-walk and then canter-halt transitions. These also help develop carrying and pushing power. More collection is required for these transitions to be performed well. Riders should not work on them until the aforementioned transitions are easy and the horse can collect the canter to the speed of the walk. That is the key to a good canter-walk transition. I see lots of poorly prepared transitions because the horse is not collected enough. The horse has to develop the ability to slow the canter while maintaining an active hind leg. Then the transition is easy — riders just allow the horse to walk. It is almost like a reward for working hard: collect, engage, carry, and then relax into the walk.

When I ask for collected canter, I ride with a holding seat. I squeeze my upper legs and sit deep while backing up the half-halt with my hands. Riders might have to remind their horse to keep the engagement in the canter with a tickle from their lower leg or a tap with the whip. Commonly, the horse will brace its neck when schooling collection, so suppling the neck is needed to encourage the horse to continue stretching to the

Horse Squats: Building A Horse's Hind End Muscles and Creating Power

Continued from the previous page...

bit. Once riders can ride a canter-walk transition reliably, they can progress to canter-halt. It is the same circle of aids, but riders just apply a harder half-halt when ready to halt so that they eliminate the walk steps.

In upper-level horses, riders often forget to school the canter-trot-canter transitions because they get preoccupied with the more advanced ones. This is a mistake. Riders need to always keep the horse sharp and willing to go from a canter to a forward-pushing trot. Sometimes well-schooled horses want to just collect the canter when asked to come back to the trot from the canter. The aids can be very similar for these two

transitions, so it is important to school both regularly. Again, aids should be clear and distinct.

In my training horses, I devote one day each week to just schooling the various transitions. It is easy to get caught up in the movements and forget the basics. The everyday training should be methodical — not tricks and movements all the time. Establish the basics (i.e., transitions, suppleness, connection, and reaction to the aids), and the fun stuff will come more easily.



Jenn Boblitt, photographed by Cait Boblitt

STROMATT SPORTHORSES

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Dinah Babcock Clinic Review

On April 7, 2024, many KDA members attended and participated in the Dinah Babcock Clinic at Flying Cross Farm in Lexington, KY. A few rides from the show can be seen below.



Abby Dondaville



Vivian Overcash



Jody Swimmer



Jenn Boblitt



Heidi Jones

All photography taken and submitted by Kristen Young, KDA President.