



# Impulsion

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**KENTUCKY DRESSAGE ASSOCIATION**

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**A**ugust in Kentucky, the days are sweltering and my motivation to get out there and ride my horses is flagging, but the shows are fast approaching and practice and training are needed. What to do? Rescue came in the form of an e-mail reminding me of the USDF Instructor Certification Series to be sponsored by KDA. I was happy to note that auditors were welcome, even those with no desire or experience to even consider being an instructor. Not having any idea of what to expect I was hoping to be able to soak in several hours of watching some advanced riders on talented horses. In the past, this tactic has helped my motivation and my riding, so I decided to make the drive to Lexington.

Little did I know what an extraordinary treat I was in for. The weather was fabulously cool and sunny as I drove into Maplecrest Farm. We were introduced to Melanie Tenney, the instructor for the weekend. The wealth of knowledge Melanie possessed and her willingness and ability to share it with the official PIs (Participating Instructors: Jenny Ernst Elliot, Katherine Poulin-Neff, Reese and Lindsay Koffler) and the lowly auditors like me was soon apparent.

The day started with the PIs riding and evaluating their own horses. Of course the riding was excellent, and it was interesting to hear the riders' assessments of their own mounts. Melanie discussed issues that each rider wanted to improve in her horse. Then a strategy and riding exercises were discussed and eventually performed. It was educational to watch the horses improve as new exercises were added. Even my uneducated eye could see the improvement in engagement and activity of the hind legs and the freedom in the gaits that was achieved. In the afternoon session we were treated to more good riding as the PIs were asked to ride and assess a horse unfamiliar to them. Melanie spoke in terms of the Classical Training Scale and happily answered questions on everything from tack and tack fitting to warm up strategies and

development of the gaits. Melanie also instructed the PIs how to verbalize their knowledge more effectively.

Some of the strategies discussed were using gaits other than the trot to warm up a horse. Some riders did a lot of suppling in the walk and an older thoroughbred was warmed up mainly in the canter because it was the easiest gait for him. In one horse the

canter was used to improve the engagement and impulsion at the trot. Transitions and lateral movements like leg yield and shoulder in were used to help the horse shift more weight to the hindquarters and to elevate his shoulders into a more "uphill" frame. We noticed that several horses got bored when worked continually on a twenty-meter circle but when other exercises were interspersed the work improved.



## Auditing a **USDF** Instructor Certification Clinic

By Julie Roche

I was planning on staying only for the first day but I was having so much fun I had to stay over for Sunday. On Sunday the riders got into more upper level moves including the development of canter pirouettes and the use of riding a "square" with ¼ walk pirouettes at each corner. We even got to see a glimpse of some piaffe and passage. There was a discussion of the proper use of the double bridle and uses and purpose of the curb and snaffle reins. This was all above my training level head, but it was interesting to learn that the snaffle encourages the horse to be more elevated and is important in lateral flexion of the poll and yielding of the jaw. The curb bit influences the longitudinal flexion of the poll and the yielding of the jaw also. In general the horses moved more freely forward when the curb rein was slightly looser than the snaffle rein with the curb shank pulled not more than a 45-degree angle back. The day ended with a lecture on the position of the rider and an in depth discussion of the purpose and execution of the shoulder in, "the movement everyone loves to hate".

**S**unburned and with my head jammed full of new and time tested ideas I was anxious to get on my own horse and try a few things. out. Thanks KDA for a great time.