

Clinics with Emma Griffen

My name is Kim Perth. I ride with Janet Myles at Mylestone Farm in New Haven, NY. I own a 13 year old Percheron gelding named L.D.'s Prince Casper. I have competed in the Youth Dressage Festival twice and this is my first time receiving a scholarship to be put towards riding. Emma Griffen judges many of the shows for Central New York Dressage and Combined Training Association and has also judged a show and tell at Mylestone Farm for CNYDCTA which is how we decided we wanted to start doing clinics with her. Thanks to the D4K scholarship, I was able to ride in three clinics with Emma Griffen in February, March and November 2009.

February 2009

The first day of the clinic did not start out good for me or Casper. Casper has been known to buck or take off on occasion. I have learned to deal with this and can usually stay on but there wasn't much chance of me holding on this time. It may have been the hardest buck he has ever done with me on him. I ended up on the ground with a whole lot of footing in my mouth and on my face. Emma decided to long line Casper which I found very interesting because we typically lunge him and have never tried long lining him before. He was still wild and crazy for the next five or ten minutes. After he settled back down I got back on and just did light work. Emma really focused on my position and explained how it was affecting him. She said the tightness in my body was causing him to be tight across his back. She showed me stretches I could do while on Casper and I could feel the walking improve as my body loosened. We worked on the same stretching and relaxing simple stuff the next day. The entire time I rode she reminded me to relax my legs, shoulders, arms and back. This helped him move a lot more supple and loose.

March 2009

Emma wanted to see if I had continued my stretching and relaxing exercises and how this was affecting Casper. She was very pleased with our improvement. He was moving significantly better and seemed more happy and willing to do his job. She worked on my balance by having me stand to change diagonal instead of sitting and by having me put my reins in one hand and stretch up above my head, towards the inside of arena and then tucked into my chest while trotting in both directions with both arms. We worked on getting him to bend his entire body around my leg instead of just his head and neck. Spiraling in and out on the circle is an exercise we worked on for a very long time. This exercise seemed to get him to respond to my legs better and increase the bend around my leg. I really enjoyed doing this then going to canter once we reached the outside of the circle. It helped his transition into the canter.

November 2009

Casper suffered a hoof abscess injury in late April and we were unable to show during the 2009 season or do any clinics with Emma. The next time Emma could come to do a clinic was November and luckily the weather was still nice. It was so nice that Emma had Casper and me work in the outdoor arena. She hoped it would help him loosen up even more because there is a

lot more room to work with. She noticed a great deal of improvement and wanted to challenge us more. After I warmed up and stretched, we worked on our turns on the forehand. We then did some trotting in a square shape. After that, we worked on turn on the haunches which took a lot of work to first get because Casper and I have not done them very often. We also did a lot of shoulder in and haunches in at the walk, which was a lot of fun. Canter work was another big part of the clinic. Emma was helping me learn to sit and relax in his canter stride and it was an incredibly beautiful, awesome canter to ride. He was lifting his back and neck and felt soft in my hands in the canter. The next day we did a lot of the same exercises, but added shoulder-in and haunches -in at the trot to the end of the session. After the two days Emma thanked me for really listening and for my willingness to try to do exactly what she said. She said it was really fun for her to work with me and Casper, which was great to hear! I'm really looking forward to working with her again.

I was very proud of myself and Casper and really enjoyed the Clinics with Emma Griffen. She had noticed a great improvement each time we met and I'm hoping we will continue to build upon the previous skills we have learned. Thank you very much for allowing me to participate in the great experience.