

Europe was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I am so thankful that Dressage4kids awarded me this wonderful scholarship. The trip started out on May 30<sup>th</sup> when I flew out a day before Donarweiss to meet him when he arrived in Germany. Donarweiss (DW) arrived in Dorsten, Germany on May 31<sup>st</sup>, he was quite excited because of the new environment and cold weather. I let him rest for two days and just hand walked him because of the strenuous flight.

While in Germany we were training with Johann Hinnemann, George Williams, and Kathleen Raine. It was incredible to have access to such amazing trainers. During my lessons with Johann Hinnemann we worked on perfecting our piaffe. He helped me learn how to keep DW on the spot in his Piaffe while still keeping him reactive. One of the things he would tell me was to take my legs off while piaffing and as soon as DW would stop I should give him a sharp kick so that he continues to piaffe and then take my legs off again. This exercise helped teach DW to piaffe without me having to continue to ask; this made the overall picture much prettier.

One of the key exercises I took away from my lessons with George Williams was perfecting my Extended to collected walk transition. This may seem simple but this is a movement where it is easy to lose points. DW tends to speed up as soon as I start to take up my reins. George taught me to make DW so sensitive that as soon as I lean back with my body he begins to collect. We worked on this by as soon as I would begin lean back I would give DW a half halt at the same time, he soon began

to figure out that leaning back meant to collect. This exercise made it look more graceful when I would pick up my reins from extended to collected walk.

Kathleen really helped me keep DW over his back and reactive. One exercise I found very helpful from Kathleen was the leg yield. Kathleen would have me start out in the walk and have DW leg yield across the entire arena she would then have me switch the bend half way through to make sure he stayed supple on both sides of his body. While we were leg yielding she also had me give him a squeeze to see if that would cause him to move over quicker, if he didn't react I would then give him a sharp kick and relax my leg again. After the sharper aid I would ask him to go over again with a very light aid and he began to react on the light aid so that I did not have to use the sharper aid anymore. We repeated this exercise in the trot and canter as well. This helped DW become so supple and reactive. DW started to develop a really nice rhythm in the canter and he began to jump through with his hind leg.

One lesson I learned while competing in Europe is to go over the rules of the country you are competing in. While I was warming up in Rotterdam a man walked in the ring and told me that I was not allowed to continue my warm up until I got a curb chain protector. Unfortunately I did not have a curb chain protector so Brian Hafner rushed all the way back to the barn, which is about a seven minute bike ride one way if you pedal as fast as you can. I was not aloud to do anything but walk, I tried to keep calm although it was incredible stressful because I could feel my warm up ticking away. About six minutes later the man came back and told me he is sorry and that it turns out it is only a national rule that in Holland you must have a curb

chain protector while competing. Over all it was a really good learning experience for me. From now on I will always go over the rules in each country I am competing in so that an incident like that never happens again.

Europe was an amazing opportunity and learning experience. Not only did I learn so much from the trainers but I also learned from getting to watch such incredible riders at the shows. It was amazing to be apart of team USA and feel the support from not only my wonderful team members but also from everyone at home cheering for us. I can't explain how much this trip meant to me and how much I learned, but I will cherish this experience forever. Thank you Dressage4kids for helping make this experience possible.

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