

RMDS Meeting Schedules RMDS Executive Board

All RMDS Executive Board meetings occur on the second Thursday of every odd-numbered month. Steering committee meetings are held on the second Monday of every even-numbered month. Board of Governor's meeting is held the second Saturday of Nov. Contact the Central Office for precise dates.

RMDS CHAPTER MEETING SCHEDULE

Arkansas Valley TBD

Cat Siemiet 719-942-5311
catsbarn@piopec.net

Boulder Valley, 2nd Mon., even months

Claudia Barkmeier 303-417-1675
cbarkmeier@rwbaird.com

Colorado Springs, 3rd Tues, location TBD. (Check CSDressage.org website).

Simone Windeler 719-540-2000 wjsimone@msn.com

Foothills, 2nd Wed. each month.

Kathy King Johnson 303-494-0905
kathykingjohnson@uswest.net

Grand Valley, 1st Tues. each month, location TBD.

Tiger Adams, 970-523-7464
tiger@thehorseinsport.com

High Plains, 3rd Tues. each month, 7 pm, location TBD.

Alex Curnutte 303-663-0358
curnuttes@msn.com

Northern Colo., 3rd Tues. each month, location TBD.

Laura Speer 970-378-7573
riversidestables_evans@yahoo.com

Penrose, 1st Wed, each month, location TBD.

Marlene Coonradt 719-372-3864
mrcoonradt@bresnan.net

Tri State, TBA, contact Tammy Fagan 307-856-5451 tfagan@wyoming.com

Western Colorado, contact Judith Family, 970-923-8832 dns@rof.net

Clinic Review: George Williams' Colorado Debut

George Williams, 2003 rider of the Grand Prix Horse of the Year, Rocher, and vice-president of the USDF, presented a Region 5 Junior/Young Rider clinic at Crooked Willow Farms March 31 and April 1, in Larkspur Colorado. It was Williams' first clinic in Colorado.

Clinic participants were Greta Barringer-Richers on Lewis, Danielle Culver on Florian, Mary Sage Hanner on Spencer, Morgan Heinrichs on Royal Mirage, Amelia Newcomb on Samos, Anastasia Ross-McKirnan on Vitet, Christian Rudman on Oebalia, and Heather Sanders on CP Mercury Bey.

Williams generously admitted auditors to the lecture and discussion. There, he quizzed riders on the training scale, among other things. Williams defined the training scale and explained the reasoning behind the hierarchy:

Rhythm. Why is rhythm before relaxation? A reliable rhythm leads to relaxation.

Relaxation. Relaxation is the looseness of joints and muscles. Tension is tightness in the joints and muscles.

Contact. Contact is how the horse moves forward to hands and bit. Rhythm and relaxation must be in place. The horse has the feel of a "falling down neck," a neck that stays relaxed in place.

Impulsion. A better word for impulsion is throughness, the energy of the hind legs swinging to the bit.

Straightness. Why is straightness not first on the training scale? There are levels of straightness within the horse's body. With a young horse, contact and throughness must be there before you can make the horse straighter.

Collection. Piaffe, passage, and pirouettes, done well, have all the ingredients of the training scale.

Top riders maintain the qualities of all the scale. They go up the scale then back down it. As the horse becomes more through, with more impulsion, the better the contact, the looseness and the rhythm.

For some horses in the clinic, finding relaxation meant increasing the looseness in the topline in the collected trot. In the canter, it was better throughness through tempo, with more jump coming from a comfortable tempo. Horses were softened

laterally so they would give longitudinally.

No half halt was finished until there was a release.

For horses who were spooky and tight in the topline, it was OK to go slowly. It was not OK to chase a tense horse. Williams advocated teaching a spooky horse through ring figures rather than direct confrontation.

Putting the rider in charge of line and tempo was a subtle way of letting the horse know who was in charge, without confrontation. Williams said a horse who was too tense did not have his mind in the right place. The more tense the horses were, the more the riders were encouraged to relax. Keeping the horses loose or relaxed was foremost, and instructions came in the form of gentle horseplay: "play her round" or "tickle her with the whip."

For another horse who was tense through the topline, but quite forward, the rider was also admonished not to rush the horse forward. She was instructed to soften him, then forward, then soften, then forward. Even in the piaffe work, with pressure at its utmost, relaxation reigned. The rider was asked not to drive too much in the piaffe, as too much pressure makes the horse tense. Too much energy creates too much pressure, leading to tension. Energy was not the issue, softness and throughness were.

By going up and down the training scale, Williams solved upper level issues. Horses having problems in the four tempis worked them out by returning to straightness. Issues in tension in the highest level horses, such as immobility in the halt, were solved through relaxation, using treats or waiting until the horse stood still to dismount, as dismounting is the greatest reward for the horse.

As an auditor, I have seen far too many clinics resulting in tight, balled up, sweaty horses and exhausted, confused riders. Too many clinicians preach the training scale, but force the tricks. Williams truly practices what he preaches, the training scale at its best. Colorado Junior/Young riders did an excellent job going up and down the training scale, and every horse improved in gaits and movements. Riders in the clinic will be presenting their clinic experiences in Part 2 in the June issue of the Centaur.