



North Carolina Dressage and Combined Training Association

NCDCTA Dressage Clinic with Michael Bragdell

Reflections from participants at the Michael Bragdell Clinic, October 23rd and 24th. Many thanks to the NCDCTA Dressage Committee for hosting this educational clinic. Thanks to Rouxtano Farm for hosting the clinic.

By: Marilyn Flowers

What's more fun than sitting at Devon watching Michael Bragdell and Qredit Hilltop win the short Grand Prix and the Freestyle? Three weeks later sitting at the lovely Rouxtano Farm and watching a Michael Bragdell clinic held by the NCDCTA.

So, I sat from October 23rd and 24th and audited a well-organized session of riders and horses, across each level. Each honed their dressage as Michael took each pair through an assessment of relaxation, training goals, and what appeared, for each, a customized pattern. Throughout all the rides and discussion, I found myself reflecting - this is classical and practical - the instruction and rides really provided some great information and visual takeaways.

Watching Warmups

Michael assessed the horse's free walk on a long rein or long connection to gauge relaxation. He worked with each rider to help them feel the impulsion, swing, and their natural contact. He presented the idea of, letting the horse take you, feel enough pressure that they pull your arm, find a way to not be in the way but to still bring an expectation. He shared that some horses have an enormous walk and if you have a big horse, it is ok to have a big feel. To transition, he guided riders to not pick up the reins, rather to use the seat and legs to queue the horse to come to a medium carriage and then organize the reins.

Many riders leveraged the 20-meter circle to improve the canter focusing on the final quarter of the open side. This setup is for naturally improving the quality of the canter depart and keeping impulsion and balance on the circle. Michael shared how this pattern easily adapts to introduce the canter departure at a different letter or to help the horse in the same spot, for introducing the walk to canter transitions.

Prerequisites and Patterns

As many riders sought to improve show goals, Michael presented a pattern that was practical and established the prerequisites for their level. I really enjoyed seeing continuity between day 1 and day 2 and how Michael and the riders progressed. My favorite on Sunday, when Launi Masterson and her Trakehner gelding Henry Knox continued polishing second level movements. *Continued on page 3...*

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Linda Mansmann and Eloise, with Michael Bragdell.
Photo credit: Dick Mansmann



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NCDCTA 2021 HORSE OF THE YEAR AWARDS GALA

February 5th, 2022
 Fair Barn, Pinehurst, NC

5:30 PM -Happy Hour
 6:30 PM -Dinner
 Awards & Dancing!

Tickets:

\$30 members

\$50 non members

Sponsorship Table:

Tables are \$475

(Includes 10 tickets & division sponsorship)

Division Sponsorship: \$175

Sponsorship, Ticket & Hotel information on the website.

Ask for NCDCTA special hotel rates.

WWW.NCDCTA.ORG/HOY-GALA

Continued from front page.

Launi and Henry executed a pattern with movements similar to the tests for gaining more control of the shoulders and securing the counter canter. This same pattern naturally enhanced the departure in canter walk transitions.

All so practical that at the end of each day, I easily imagined taking away ideas and patterns for my training...and did!

By: Launi Masterson

I had the distinct pleasure to participate in the 2021 NCDCTA educational symposium with Michael Bragdell on my 14-year-old Trakehner, Henry Knox. Henry and I worked on 2nd level movements, specifically developing, and maintaining a quicker hind leg to support the lateral work and counter canter movements required at this level.

On both days, we warmed up at the trot, making sure that Henry was in front of my leg and demonstrating a forward and even tempo before moving into level-specific movements. To improve our turn on the haunches, Michael asked us to make a series of square turns to help show Henry that he needs to keep a quick hind leg along with forward motion to execute this movement properly. From there, we moved into counter-canter exercises with an aim to create sustained "jump" in the canter, and a more balanced counter-canter overall. These exercises were bookended with walk-canter and canter-walk transitions which helped to keep Henry on the bit and working over his back.

Michael was kind, clear and concise in his instruction and we came away with many exercises to add to the tool box. Michael jokingly named one of the counter-canter exercises after me, which added a light moment to some intense work. I have now incorporated "the Launi" into training with all my horses! Overall, a good time was had by all, and I hope to have other opportunities to participate in future symposiums.

By: Caroline Thompson

I was so grateful to be given the opportunity to ride in an NCDCTA clinic with Michael Bragdell. He is an amazing teacher, I learned so much and had such a great time riding! Mr. Bragdell is a very calm and reassuring teacher, which I liked!

On the first day, he asked me what I wanted to work on, and what I struggled with. He watched me ride for a second to get to know me and my horse. He gave me some really good instruction and made points about things I had never thought about before!

My horse and I struggle with having a nice, active walk, without her breaking to the trot. As we worked, he gave me some really good guidance. The suggestion that seemed to help the most was to close my leg and seat to prepare my horse for the medium walk when coming out of free walk. This helped tell her that something was about to change. I was about to pick up my reins, so she wasn't surprised, and she didn't break to trot. I used his suggestions in our most recent show and my horse's walk was so much better and my scores went up!

On the second day, we continued working on what we had started. At the end of my lesson, we tried doing some counter canter. I hadn't done very much counter canter before then, so it was really fun! He had me go up centerline, go to either E or B, depending on which lead we were on, and then come back to centerline. Mr. Bragdell gave me ideas on doing this basic shape but also changing it up a bit. This will increase the difficulty and ask questions of my horse. The clinic was really beneficial for me and my horse.

A big thank you to the NCDCTA and Rouxtano Farm for hosting the clinic and for allowing me to be a demo rider and learn so much from Mr. Bragdell! I look forward to participating in as many clinics as I can in the future!

Much of the clinic's live stream recordings are available to watch on the NCDCTA Facebook page.



Mary Messinger and Cafe Mocha. Photo credit: Geri Messinger

Autumn Leaves Scholarship Recipient

By: Ellie Chisholm



Ellie Chisholm and Rebel after the Champions Parade. Photo by: Lisa Chisholm

My first Autumn Leaves competition did not start the way that I hoped. It was really cold and windy. Then Rebel decided to take a “nature break” at the beginning of my NDPC Training 1 test...right in front of the judge!

But things got better quickly. We had a wonderful Intro A test and I was really proud of how Rebel did in our Training 1 test.

We also had time for some fun with friends. We were stabling with some good friends, Savannah Brown and her horse Lucky and Claudia Foushee and her horse Riddle. I got to meet Emeraude Dandurand for the first time and got to meet Rebel’s twin, Manny. (Heather Hamilton Boyer’s pony)

On Sunday morning, I was really proud of myself for braiding Rebel’s mane for the first time without any help. Helen Ingersoll told me about an easy way that she makes scallop braids on Dino, so I tried it on Rebel, and it worked!

Our Intro B test was probably the best we’ve ever done. We were first in the group, so we had to wait and wait to find out whether our scores would be good enough to win. They were! We also moved up to 6th place at Training level. At the end of the day, I got to be in the Champions parade. It was maybe the happiest moment in my life.

I really want to thank my trainer Andi Furnari for helping me through the hard stuff and helping me go so far. Thanks to NCDCTA for giving me this scholarship that made this weekend possible and running a wonderful competition. I am definitely coming back next year!



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She Wants to Touch All Their Noses

An essay by: Dianne May

This past weekend I was lucky to compete at the fall horse trials at Windridge Farm in Mooresboro, NC. A family run farm and event, it has welcoming, friendly staff, great facilities and a low-key atmosphere and I highly recommend it.

Though I've been riding most of my life, I only started eventing four years ago. Like any newcomer I've had my share of ups and downs. For my first two years of eventing, I showed my fjord gelding, Thor but after two years of struggles, I decided we weren't that compatible. His main goal, which he was very determined to achieve, was putting in the least effort required and returning to the barn and to his favorite field to graze and mine was learning this sport and having fun.

I grew up riding hunters in the northeast and though I trained and rode my own OTTB, I was never the bravest rider, and this hasn't changed as I've aged. I realized Thor needed more confidence than I could give him. I was lucky to be able to buy another horse without selling Thor and even luckier when I found my little quarter horse gelding Gilligan.

At 17, Gilly had enough age on him not to be silly but not too much that he couldn't pass a PPE. When I bought Gilligan, he had mostly fox hunted and shown jumpers. Dressage and cross country were new to him, but he is very willing and has taken it all in stride. Not that we haven't had our own challenges. Finding our connection in dressage took until this summer and is still very much a work in progress.

At times on the cross-country course Gilly can get overwhelmed by all there is to see. But with Gilly I've been able to expand my goals of not just finishing a horse trial but also placing well, picking up points towards the NCDCTA HOY awards and contemplating moving up from starter to beginner novice.

Having goals is always good. It gives me something to focus on and to look forward to but the flip side of that is sometimes I can lose sight of what's important and place too much pressure on myself. I start doubting my abilities and fear making mistakes and letting down both myself and my trainer.

Don't get me wrong my trainer is a very lovely, generous person who patiently trains me despite my over 50's mental and emotional state (remembering courses is like a full-time job and every day holds a new physical ailment and ache and pain.) She never puts too much pressure on me and is able to walk the fine line of challenging me and also encouraging me, but she too has a family life outside of horses and I hate thinking I've wasted her time when I make stupid mistakes at a show and don't ride up to my potential.

Somewhere along the line this year in an effort to achieve both my goals, I convinced myself that moving up to beginner novice meant I was a more accomplished and better rider, which is silly. If I can move up, great, but that doesn't diminish what I've achieved or can continue to achieve at the starter level. This sport needs all levels to flourish and grow.

Sometimes I forget how far I've come and though points are fun to chase and moving up divisions can be rewarding; those are not the most important things or the reason I embarked on learning a new sport within my hobby of horses. Like so many other riders out there, I juggle raising a family along with this time-consuming hobby. If I forget my reasons for doing it then it can become as hard and joyless as cleaning the house or doing laundry.

But I had two very fortunate occurrences happen to me at Windridge. On Saturday, the first day of competition I spoke with my neighbor who had just returned from her show jumping round. I asked her how it went. She smiled and said to me, "It was good. We weren't perfect but that's okay I just feel lucky to be here riding. I never thought I'd be able to compete with him again so I'm just glad to be here." I thought about her words all afternoon and evening and how true they were because as horse people we all know that you never know when your horse might get hurt and when things might turn for the worse.



Dianne May and Gilligan competing in cross country at Windridge Farm in Mooresboro, NC. Photo Credit: Mark Jump Photography.

The second occurrence was on Sunday. While letting Gilly graze and stretch his legs in the morning, a young girl and her brother approached me. She might have been 5 years old and her brother around 8. She asked me "Can I pet your horse?" I answered of course and with a little hand and very big sparkling eyes she reached out and stroked Gilly's nose. Her brother sidled up next to me and reported "She just wants to pet every horse's nose here." I smiled back and replied, "I remember the feeling."

I did remember that feeling of wanting to pet every horse I saw, convincing my parents to take me to the nearby horse farm so that I could reach through the slats of the fence and tentatively make contact with the animals that inhabited my dreams. I remember feeling in awe when I connected with them, when they sniffed my hand, or I could look into their big brown trusting eyes. I remember the excitement bursting through me if and when I might be offered a quick lead line ride and how those moments would sustain my dreams of someday learning to ride.

The little girl and her brother stayed for a few minutes, her brother watching over her and she is petting Gilly and it was just the thing I needed to get my head on straight. They reminded me why I do this sport. Yes, I wanted to win, and no I didn't want to make any mistakes or have a run out like we did a month earlier, but ultimately at the end of the day this is the thing I do for fun. This is my hobby. This is my escape from the pressures of the rest of the world and I'm so very lucky to be able to do it at any level.

Sunday was one of those beautiful Carolina fall days, warm with a slight breeze and crystal-clear blue skies. I owed it to myself and to Gilly to put aside the pressure and the goals and enjoy the day and all it had to offer. For me there is always an underlying excitement and nerves that goes along with heading out onto a cross country course with a thousand-pound animal that loves to run, but I was determined to make sure I enjoyed it as best as I could.

As my stabling neighbor reminded me, you just never know what might happen, especially with horses. There is no guarantee that you will get another competition to go to, that this ride might wind up being your last for a week, or a month or even forever. Horses are prone to injury as I'm sure everyone reading this article knows firsthand and life has a way of turning on a dime when you least expect it. It's not that I forgot my goals of HOY points or moving up, it's just that I needed to remind myself that those goals were not my sole reason for being there or the most important ones. My reason was to share this wonderful day and fantastic sport with the animal that I love and to have fun.



Dianne May and Gilligan competing in show jumping at Windridge Farm in Mooresboro, NC. Photo Credit: Mark Jump Photography.

Maybe I would be lucky enough to bring home the blue ribbon at the end of the day, but that was just the icing not the main dessert. Likewise, the division title doesn't determine what kind of rider I am. What makes me a good rider is whether I am a good horseman. That I put my horse's needs in front of my own, that I take care of him and that I put in my best effort and then let things fall where they may. I would like to say that this is a lesson well learned and one I won't need to revisit again but I can't guarantee that. I'm hoping that by writing it down this will at least give me something to refer to when I start to lose my focus and berate myself for a silly decision on cross country, a rail in show jumping or a dressage test that's not as exact as I'd like it to be.

But what I can say for sure now is that Sunday afternoon, long after most of the other divisions had finished, the steward counted me down and we cantered out of that start box and over the first fence and down the rolling hills to the rest of the course, the green earth churning out beneath Gilly's strong capable hooves, the wind brushing by my face, and that little girl inside me who wanted to touch all the horses' noses smiled her whole way around.



NCDCTA Board Meeting 11/9/2021

The NCDCTA Executive Board and membership met via teleconference on November 9, 2021. President Amanda Miller called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Board members present were Amanda Miller, Tyler James, Rachel Edwards, Wendy Warner, Joan Hilsman, Tonya Bruno, Emme Johnston, Amy Warren, Alex Martini, Jessica Brown and Will Barrus. Excused were Tiana Darling and Deb Branson.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Joan Hilsman presented the membership numbers as of November 9, 2021:

Adult Amateur: 396	Paid Horses: 371
Jr/YR: 132	Volunteer Card Horses: 110
Open: 140	Total Horses: 481
Total Members: 668	

TREASURER'S REPORT: Tyler James reported that all but ten of the refund checks from BLMs are prepared, and he is working on the financial analysis in QuickBooks.

COMMUNICATION CHAIR'S REPORT: Tonya Bruno reported that the Board has already narrowed down the newsletter new name nominations to five options, and she will send those options out to the membership for final selection.

COMPETITION REPORT: Wendy Warner reported that Autumn Leaves had 170 entries. The show ran in five rings over two very full days. It was miserable weather, but everything ran smoothly. The Secretary and Manager did a great job. A hiccup was the award ceremonies; the timing is difficult, for example, if one ring is running late. Some suggestions were to make it a three-day show and switching championship classes to the second test of the level as opposed to the first test.

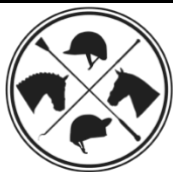
Tyler James brought up that it would be helpful if the Club had a separate bank account just for shows. Joan Hilsman suggested gathering a task force to help direct the Club and the Board regarding future shows. Will Barrus suggested compiling and sending out a survey with a list of issues and solutions to figure out the membership's thoughts.

HOY GALA CHAIR REPORT: Jessica Brown had many options for Board discussion about the Gala.

EDUCATION CHAIR'S REPORT: Emme Johnston reported that the Michael Bragdell clinic went well. Tonya LaTorre hosted and did a fantastic job. There were fifteen to twenty auditors per day. Thanks to all the demo riders, all of whom seemed happy. Wendy Warner suggested a future scribing clinic as multiple people have expressed interest.

EVENTING CHAIR'S REPORT: Amy Warren reported that War Horse is this weekend. Prizes will get passed out. Will Barrus, will be scoring the War Horse series and will be putting points together for NCDCTA championships.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 PM.
Respectfully submitted by Rachel Edwards, Recording Secretary.



NCDCTA CALENDAR

FULL SCHEDULE CAN BE FOUND AT www.NCDCTA.org/calender

SHOWS & EVENTS for 2022 - Please check the Calendar online to stay up to date!

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