

BSEA Close Contact Newsletter
April 2008

Diane Erhart, President
Kathy Hannas, Vice President
Sheila Ruble, Secretary, newsletter editor
Emily Zalweski, Treasurer

The BSEA sponsored Balimo clinic was held at White Aspen Ranch on April 20-21. Eckart Meyners, a professor of sports physiology and movement at the University of Lunenburg in Germany, has worked with the German national equestrian federation for the past 25 years. He and his brother-in-law, a bio-medical research scientist, designed the Balimo chair, a low, adjustable height stool with a rotating seat that improves balance and flexibility in the neck, shoulders, hips and back. Balimo clinics are predicated on the teachings of Meyners and geared towards discovering any tensing or shortening of muscles which result in interference with body coordination and unclear aids to the horse.

The clinic began with a general lecture to the group of participating auditors and riders, with opportunities for individuals to ask questions. We all then went down to the arena area, to do a group warmup consisting of large body movements such as arm swinging while walking; skipping with one leg crossing over in front of the other; backwards, sideways and frontwards walking on both heels and toes, various head movements, etc. Each rider then had an individual lesson, with clinician Tracy Robertson evaluating their position, aids and overall influence on the horses' way of going. The audience was expected to help with the evaluation, which sharpened our eyes and encouraged us to see the correlation between problems such as stiff arms or tight shoulders, pinching knees or ineffective leg aids and the gaits and attitude of the horse.

Our riders, some eventers and some dressage riders, had an interesting array of blockages or holding patterns. After riding long enough for Tracy to identify core issues, each rider was asked to dismount. Tracy seated her on the Balimo chair, asking her to rotate her pelvis front, center, back and side to side to retrain new neurologic pathways and create more fluidity of motion. Some riders were given brief massages to the neck and shoulders. Tendons were "plucked" on the inside of the knees and the achilles, and under the armpits. Lying on a tarp, the rider might have one leg stretched over and across the other, with Tracy massaging the outside of the hip or pushing gently on the rider's thigh to increase the stretch. After the body work, the rider would remount and we could all see the difference in the way of going in both horse and rider. Canter departs became more fluid, flying changes more correct, sitting the trot easier. The horses' strides opened up, with greater reaching towards the bit and less defensive posturing.

Participating auditors stood around as the riders were worked on, asking questions and getting a chance to sit on the Balimo chair themselves. After lunch, another general question and answer session and lecture was followed by the rest of the riders. Sunday was more of the same, but with a greater emphasis on working the horse correctly now that some basic rider position issues had been improved.

Personable and well prepared, Tracy gave everyone their money's worth, and riders were requesting a return engagement. Dinner Saturday night at Enzo's included both riders and auditors.

A great deal of thanks is due to Stacey Dietz and Linda Priddy for their outstanding job of creating and distributing flyers, liability forms, posters, and arranging for the barn rental. Stacey also prepared delicious chili dishes for lunch Sunday, donating the proceeds back to BSEA, picked Tracey up from the airport, and hosted her at her home. Linda did the scheduling and handled the arrangements for the Balimo chair and instructional materials to be shipped from Missoula to Billings and back again.

Thanks also to Diane Erhart, whose idea this all was in the first place, and who made all the initial contacts and airline reservations. Thanks to Beartooth Pony Club for taking care of concessions, with snacks and a terrific lunch and drinks on Saturday. Sheila Ruble did the original scouting for arenas, formulated the outline for allocation of duties, wrote up publicity for area newsletters and the web site, and helped with the arena set up and takedown.

And a **very** special thanks goes to all the riders who served as such good sport guinea pigs, allowing all of us to learn at your expense! The clinic could not have gone on without you!!

Riders included Linda Priddy, Sheila Buschette, Leigh Taggart, Sharon Meyers, Emily Zalewski, Shelby and Amelia Rexford, and Allie Cederburg.

For more information and descriptions of rider stretches, look up the May 2005 issue of Dressage Today magazine, which has a feature article on Eckart Meyners, the Balimo chair, and body-awareness techniques.

Unfortunately, despite the excellent organization and presentation of this clinic, lack of participation by members of the regional equestrian community resulted in a net loss to BSEA of \$500.

We are hoping the response will be more enthusiastic in two months, when BSEA will be hosting another rider position oriented clinic in mid-June, location to be determined but probably WEP, with an upper level, certified Centered Riding instructor from Maine. Please check the BSEA web site for entry forms and more information on this clinic. Centered Riding clinics are based on the teachings of Sally Swift, whose books and videos have received worldwide acclaim and recognition. Please join us for what promises to be another great clinic experience. We will need volunteers to help put on this clinic. Please call either Sheila Ruble (245-2366 or Diane Erhart, 633-2071, if you can help out.

Also, the first of four Jutta Schott clinics will be held at Sheila Ruble's, on May 9-11. Entries for this clinic can also be found on the BSEA website. It should be noted that the Jutta clinics are, and **always** have been, a BSEA sponsored activity. Some individuals are under the incorrect impression that I hold these clinics as a private individual. I donate the use of my arena to keep costs of lessons down for everyone, but these are not "private" clinics. They are open to everyone and auditors are admitted free. Jutta has an extensive, classical education in dressage and we encourage anyone interested to attend. Jutta's bio can also be found on the website. We are hopeful that stabling at WEP will be available by the time of the first clinic, which will be very convenient for out-of-town attendees.

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Preliminary Award Standings and Archived Award Results Available Online

Lexington, KY (April 10, 2008) - The United States Dressage Federation announced today that 2008 preliminary award standings for the Adequan/USDF Year-End Awards, including the Adequan/USDF All-Breeds Awards, are now available on the USDF Web site as well as archived award results for the previous two competition seasons. Anyone who logs into the USDF site can access the most up-to-date award standings and monitor these standings throughout the competition year. Archived results are available only to those individuals who are logged into the USDF Web site and have a participating or business membership (PM/BM).

The preliminary awards standings for Adequan/USDF Year-End Awards are obtained by selecting an award category (i.e. Dressage Horse of the Year, Adult Amateur, Junior/Young Rider) and level (Training - Grand Prix). In the case of the Adequan/USDF All-Breeds Awards, the standings are available by selecting an all-breeds participating organization (PO), category and level. However, only the standings in categories awarded by the chosen PO are accessible.

The preliminary award standings search function is available to determine a person's or horse's standing for the specified year-end awards. By entering a horse's or person's USDF number, one can access a full listing of their ranking for all respective awards.

"These new features not only provide additional benefits to our members, but will also maintain the accuracy of award standings throughout the year by enabling members to monitor their progress and address any issues prior to the year's end," stated Chad Compton, Director of IT Services.

For more information on USDF awards or related online services, contact the competitions department at competitions@usdf.org or call the USDF office at (859) 971-2277. May 2008 Message
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Regional Message from Teresa Hunt:

The agenda for Spring Executive Board meeting in April was online prior to the meeting that was held at the USDF National Education Center, in Lexington, KY. The agenda included an update on the Competition Standards, review of NAJRYC criteria and qualifying competitions, and preparation for the 2008, 2009 and 2010 conventions. I will give you more details in my next regional message.

Lendon Gray has been appointed President and CEO of the Dressage Foundation effective September 1, 2008. In 2007 the Dressage Foundation awarded \$112,000 to further dressage education. The Dressage Foundation offers multiple scholarships each year for Instructor/Trainers and the Carol Lavell Gifted grants for amateurs. The Continuing Education Program for Judges and USDF "L" Graduates has \$800 per region available from the Dressage Foundation. Information about Lendon Gray and these grants are available on TDF website www.dressagefoundation.org.

USDF also has grant money available to each region, generally for group educational activities. From USDF: Adult Education, \$1,500; Adult Regional Team Competitions, \$500; Youth Education, \$750,

Youth Regional Team Championship, \$1000. From USDF for Convention, the Ruth Arvanette Memorial Fund and the Youth Convention Scholarship, \$1000 and discounted registration.

USEF announced the Third Annual Youth Sportsman's Award. Nominations open May 1, 2008 and USDF forwards our nomination to USEF by October 31. The program is designed to recognize Youth (must be age 17 or under) who demonstrate an ongoing commitment and dedication to the promotion of the horse and serve as a role model for peers. Last year's winner was Kirstin Kimbler nominated by the American Endurance Ride Conference and the Arabian Horse Association. She received \$1000 scholarship and lifetime membership to USEF valued at \$2500 among other things. Its not too early to start looking at the criteria on the USEF website. I am sure we have Youth in our region that are deserving of this award.

Happy Riding!
Theresa Hunt
Region 5 Director