

TEAM DAWSON

To: Para-Equestrian National Technical Committee (PENTC), South African National Equestrian Federation (SANEF), South African Equestrian Council (SAEC)

Date: 24 July 2011

Topic: Anthony Dawson's trip to the UK and competition at Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*)

Itinerary

29.06.2011 - Arrive in United Kingdom

29.06.2011 – 04.07.2011 - Train at South Bucks RDA with coach, Clive Milkins

05.07.2011 - Observe the Greenwich Olympic Test Event

06.07.2011 - Move to Windacres Farm, Surrey – to train on competition horse, Middlemarch (owned and trained by Sally Andrews)

07.07.2011 - Compete at regional show, affiliated to British Dressage on Middlemarch ("Test run" for combination before Hartpury CPEDI3*)

08.07.2011 – 10.07.2011 - Train with Sally Andrews at Windacres Farm on horse, Middlemarch

11.07.2011 – 16.07.2011 - Move to and compete at Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*)

18.07.2011 - Depart United Kingdom

Goals for the trip

Whilst at South Bucks RDA:

- To develop the rider's skills and abilities on borrowed horses
- To develop rider's feel and riding knowledge
- Analysis of Rider position and the effects of rider's disabilities on different horses

Whilst at Windacres Farm:

- To adjust to horse in preparation for Hartpury CPEDI3*
- Compete at the Royal Leisure Affiliated Dressage Competition, "test run"

Whilst at Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*):

- Achieve over 65% in all three tests (Team, Individual Championship and Freestyle to Music)
- Finish in the Top Ten on all three competition days

Analysis of visit to South Bucks RDA

29.06.2011

Horses ridden: Gazel and Yogi II

Objectives: Coach to analysis improvement / deterioration of rider's skills and abilities

Rider Feedback:

Gazel – I can see a definite improvement in my riding ability on this horse, in comparison to last year (July 2010). I'm able to ask more of the horse (i.e. get bigger and more elastic movement), while still keeping him in a frame and connected. Horse has become deader to the leg, since last year. This was a good test for my overall strength; this has greatly improved, as I only needed to use a set of spurs as an assisting aid, instead of spurs and dressage whip, which I had to use last year. Deterioration has been found in my right upper body, it is not as flexible as in February 2011, and the right hand has become dependent on my left side to assist with vertical flexion.

Areas to work on:

- Right upper body – flexibility
- Hands to work independently of each other
- Keeping the flow in medium paces

Yogi II – Started off, where I finished in February 2011. I battle with keeping the horse connected, as he is quite long in the back; however, this will be worked on as the week progresses. Horse was lovely and active, clear four-beat rhythm in walk, two-beat in trot and three-beat in canter. Tempo was quick; suppleness can be improved on, as the horse is on the forehand and downhill. He will become more uphill and lighter in the hand once connection is improved. Again, the lack of independence in my hands presents a challenge which is more noticeable on Yogi than Gazel.

Areas to work on:

- Connection
- Hand independence, to be worked on with physiotherapist, Joyce Sheppard

30.06.2011

Horses ridden: Gazel and Mechanical Horse

Objectives: Rider position and posture

Rider Feedback:

Gazel – We worked on keeping my hand to each of their relevant sides and the left hand to become “floppy” on the right rein, as this will help solve the challenge on non-independence between my hands. The medium paces were much better as Joyce and I had worked on moving my hips with the movement instead of being rigid in the saddle. It was noted that my weight was too much to the left.

Areas to work on:

- Hands to work independently of each other
- Weight distribution in the saddle, worked on with Joyce on the mechanical horse

Mechanical Horse – Weight distribution was mostly to the left. Joyce has helped develop a technique to help even out distribution. I also seem to be sitting behind the movement in trot and canter; I need to feel as though I am leaning too far forward, to be in the correct position. Joyce did note, how engaged my core was when riding and how it has greatly improved, since February 2011.

Areas to work on:

- Weight distribution
- Position

01.07.2011

Horses ridden: Lambrusco III and Prince Charming

Objectives: Rider position and analysis of new horse

Rider Feedback:

Lambrusco III – My right side flexibility is much improved, even since arriving in the UK. Worked the horse in a long and low frame and really got him to stretch. Horse was active, with good rhythm and tempo. Suppleness was better to the left than to the right. Horse had good straightness, as hands are now working more independently.

Areas to work on:

- Working horse is a more collected, connected and competition frame
- Suppleness to the right

Prince Charming – Worked on keeping the horse round. This ride gave me, as a rider the opportunity to develop a warm-up technique that works for both the horse and I. I did “wonder around” on the horse without much of a plan, as I am quite dependent on the coach’s eye on the floor. I need to feel more on top.

Areas to work on:

- Develop a warm-up that works with all horses that I ride and myself
- Independence of coach’s eye
- Always have a plan when riding

02.07.2011

Horses ridden: Gazel and Tax

Objectives: Rider’s feel on horses

Rider Feedback:

Gazel – Horse was much livelier today. Started with the six circle exercise, moving on to transitions and ending with turn on the haunches. I wanted to test myself with the turn on the haunches and feel when they were stuck or not. Preparation for turn on the haunches starts with shoulder-in. Feel was okay, most were stuck; I think I’m starting off too tight and then the horse is unable to keep the march in his step. Will have to practice more tomorrow.

Areas to work on:

- Turn on the haunches and keeping the activity

Tax – Started long and low, trot was lacking in purpose; worked on 20m canter circle to get him going, really helped with the activity, but our straightness went out the window! Counter canter was used to assist with that. Tax kept falling out the counter canter. The must be fixed!

Areas to work on:

- Keep the counter canter
- Straightness

03.07.2011

Horses ridden: Tax and Lambrusco III

Objectives: Coach to analysis improvement / deterioration of rider's skills and abilities

Rider Feedback:

Tax – After much thought, it came to my attention that I was taking the turn for the counter canter to tight and sharply. It is better to go across the diagonal and not to go so deep into the corner. Horse was forward and fluid and more accepting of the contact. Counter canter was very successful, no breaking into trot. Transitions were good, downward transitions from canter to trot and trot to walk need some work.

Areas to work on:

- Downward transitions (canter to trot, trot to walk)
- Counter canter exercises (i.e. preparations and lines)

Lambrusco III – Had a lesson with Paralympic, World and European Gold Medallist, Sophie Christiansen on riding the turn on the haunches. My turn on the haunches apparently looked like mini roundabouts. Sophie told me how she prepares for the turn and how she adjusts her body and then the horse's body. "It starts with putting the majority of your weight on your inside seat bone. Starting the turn, put your outside leg back and inside leg forward. Now for the horse – it's all about preparation, flexion, collection. So to prepare the horse, shorten its walk steps, think shoulder-in feeling i.e. shoulder fore (flexion) and for collection, think passage steps and keep the march. Finally just think pirouette and he should do it!" Sophie's technique really worked and the turns were excellent. Clive said that if he was judging he would award 7s and 8s!

Areas to work on:

- Preparation for the turns!

04.07.2011

Horses ridden: Gazel

Objectives: Final Analysis

Rider Feedback:

Gazel - A forward, active and supple ride. Horse's suppleness was better than my last ride on the horse. The exercises worked on were the six circle exercise in walk, 20m circles in trot, 4 loop serpentines with walk/trot transitions over the centre line. My position was less behind the movement and I had much more flexibility in my right side. A very successful training period!

05.07.2011

Greenwich Test Event

It was amazing to be at the Greenwich Test Event, waving the South African flag for Paul Hart and his horse, Carlow Miller. They did our country very proud!

The future Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian venue is amazing! Spectacular views, world class facilities, in general it's AWESOME!

The facilities are completely removable; this is to showcase how an organisation can hold a world class equestrian event in the middle of a city centre. The warm-up and competition arenas are built on "stilts" as not to affect the ground of Greenwich Park. The surfaces in the arena are great, a sand and silicon mix. Speaking to some of the Test Event's para riders, they said they could feel vibrations underneath them while riding. We'll all have to wait and see!



View from the main grand stand of the Dressage Arena

The stables, are more than world class, they are futuristic. The best temporary stables I've ever seen with fantastic bedding. Security is very tight, when I entered the stables, I was frisked and my back-pack emptied, as to make sure I

didn't have anything I shouldn't. It is really great to know that they are so security conscious already.

In conclusion, seeing the South African flag on one of the flagpoles around the main arena, overlooking the London skyline, was truly inspiring and I could see and feel myself riding down the centre line. My visit to Greenwich has really ignited the Olympic torch inside of me! BRING ON LONDON 2012.

Training at Windacres Farm

06.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: First ride, analysis of horse and way of going

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – What a super horse! Very accepting of the contact, a little stiff on the left compared to the right good thing, the left is my good side.

Middlemarch has superb paces - active, fluid, reaching and correct.. I feel so safe on him, which is extremely important. Sally is a fantastic coach! I need to work on remembering that flexion is used as a correction (to avoid quarters from coming in on right rein) and not to fall into the downward transitions. This is so exciting! I can't wait to see how we do as a combination.

Areas to work on:

- Downward transitions (canter to trot, trot to walk)
- "Flexion as a correction"

The session can be viewed from these two links:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buyBXY10moA&feature=channel_video_title
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoL1zy7t5KA&feature=channel_video_title

07.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Competition: Royal Leisure Dressage (Affiliated to British Dressage)

Objectives: See horse and rider as a combination in competition environment

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – Fondly called Monkey by all who know and love him, was lovely. He completely changes at a competition and sort of says, “Oh a competition- I can do this!” The first test we rode was the Individual Championship (which unfortunately wasn’t videoed) – the downward transitions were abrupt and the halts hollowing. The trot work was really good, two 8s for my mediums and the rest of the trot work was on a 7. It’s the walk that let me down, my entire fault! I kept using my leg, which instead of making the stride bigger, it just became choppy and stilted. The walk movements all sat at either a 6 or 6.5. There was definitely room for improvement!

The second test was the Team (which was videoed) – in the warm-up we really worked on me, and not chipping away at the walk. It was much better now sitting on a 6.5 and 7 in the test. Monkey was a little tired during the second test, so some of the medium work was not as flamboyant, as it had been. The downward transitions were better, but could still use work, the same with the halts.

Areas to work on:

- Downward transitions (trot to walk)
- Halts
- Walk movements, not to chip away

Results: Grade II Ind. Championship Test (2010): 67.821% (1st)
 Grade II Team Test (2010): 72.043% (1st)

The Grade II Team Test (2010) can be viewed from the link below:

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9xMAfq-hM8&feature=relmfu>

08.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: Corrections from tests

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – Horse was in quite an argumentative mood today, which was brilliant because I got to see a different side to him and once we had worked through it, the quality of the work became very expressive. Trot-halt movements were better, I must remember to carry my hands lower as to avoid the horse from hollowing. Rein-backs and walk pirouettes need polishing up; the rein-back lacks self carriage and is resistant. The walk pirouettes are stuck, I seem to be starting off too small. Rosie (Sally |Andrew’s daughter and Grade IV para equestrian) helped me with the rein-backs and how she would ask him how to do them; this really helped as I would have never thought of using that

technique. Sally says she'll sit on Monkey and help with the pirouettes, as they are one of Monkey's weaknesses too.

Areas to work on:

- Trot-halt-trot movements
- Rein-backs
- Walk pirouettes

09.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: Riding the pirouette

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – Sally rode Monkey in for me – she really focussed on how he took each step and picked up that he was getting stuck on the fourth step. To contradict this, Sally told me to give him a “squeeze with the spur” on the third as to remind him to engage the inside hind legs. Using this technique really helped maintain the march in the movement, but they were still too small. The pirouettes aren't great but they certainly aren't the worst (considering how long I've ridden the horse) and that's all we can do for now, as tomorrow we work on the freestyle!

Areas to work on:

- Size of the pirouette

10.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: Freestyle to Music Practice

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – The music suits Monkey beautifully, but the floor pattern changed so many times! At least we got the pattern the same twice, so Hartpury will kind of be “third be the charm”. Medium work was brilliant today, Monkey and I were in sync with each other and he could tell everything I was going to ask of him! Today was unbelievable. It's unreal that we leave for Hartpury tomorrow.

Areas to work on:

- JUST FOLLOW THE MUSIC AND GET ALL YOUR COMPULSORY MOVEMENTS IN!

Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*)

11.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: Familiarisation

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – Horse went very nicely in the working in, with good hind leg activity and purposeful paces. Just need to watch the walk, can become stilted at times. In the field of play or competition arena, horse did not seem bothered by the surroundings and noise. Work was very much the same. I didn't realise that Jane Goldsmith (CPEDIO5*) was watching the session. She was very complimentary. A good day for all!

Areas to work on:

- Not allowing the walk to become stilted

12.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Objectives: Familiarisation

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – Session was kept short, as the trot-up started at 14:00 and there was a lot that was needed to be done with Monkey, plus we didn't want to wear him out the day before competition. Walk was much improved, more fluid today. Trot work was good; horse was a bit behind my leg at times.

Areas to work on:

- Not allowing the walk to become stilted
- Keeping horse in front of the leg

13.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Competition: Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*) – Team Test

Objectives: To achieve over 65% and finish in the top 10

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – In the working in, we made sure Monkey was in front of the leg by getting Rosie to do quite a few walk-trot and trot-canter transitions. This really helped as he felt like a little power house underneath me, it was great! In the test, I went in a little nervous, but Monkey soon calmed my nerves by really

showing off to the crowd. The medium work was excellent, getting 3 7s! The serpentine shape was great. The halt rein-back needs more self carriage and less resistance. The halts- first was inaccurate (I think I need a SatNav to find X), last halt was on the marker and square in front. We had some minor mistakes, however considering that I've sat him for only a week, I'm ecstatic!

Areas to work on:

- Accuracy with halts
- Self carriage in rein-backs

Results: Grade II Team Test (2010): 66.000% (9th)

14.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Competition: Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*) – Individual Championship Test

Objectives: To achieve over 65% and finish in the top 10

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – A much harder test today! Horse was brilliant yesterday and the goal for today was consistency. Horse was good in working in; we had to dodge some Russian riders (at some times it could be described as hit and miss). In the test, the halts were more accurate and the trot work was good, mediums weren't as flamboyant. Walk became very stilted and tense after first turn on the haunches, resulting in the horse not being in front of the aid, making the second turn on the haunches become stuck! Not the best ride today, but hey, we all have our good days and bad ones!

Areas to work on:

- Avoid the walk from becoming tense

Results: Grade II Individual Championship Test (2010):
65.285% (10th)

15.07.2011

Horse ridden: Middlemarch IV

Competition: Hartpury's Festival of Dressage (CPEDI3*) – Freestyle to Music

Objectives: To achieve over 65%, to finish in the top 10 and HAVE FUN!

Rider Feedback:

Middlemarch IV – THE LAST DAY! Can you believe it! I went in today with the mindset, “Whatever the score is, as long as I’m happy that’s what really counts!” Well, Monkey certainly felt that and pulled out all the stops! The trot was forward and active, great hind leg action, medium were flamboyant and not fast. With the walk music playing I was able to keep to the walk rhythm and it remained free and relaxed! I HAD A BLAST! What a fantastic way to end Hartpury CPEDI3*.

Results: Grade II Freestyle to Music (2010): 68.550% (7th)
 Awarded: Best Rider Under the age of 21 years Award
 Awarded: Highest Scoring Foreign Rider on a Borrowed Horse Award

16.07.2011 – 18.07.2011

This period was spent packing up and travelling back from Hartpury. Once back at Windacres Farm (my new home away from home) we rested and recuperated! I left Heathrow destined for Johannesburg, with tearful eyes, wishing that this wonderful trip spent with the most amazing people, never had to end!



Anthony Dawson training on horse, Middlemarch IV at Windacres Farm

Photo credit: Rosie Andrews

