

February 2017 - George Morris Horsemastership Training Session

Written by by Gracie & Emma Marlowe
Tuesday, 31 January 2017 21:09

A very happy New Year starts with intensive horsemanship education for California sisters.



Three California young riders were among the 12 to earn a spot in the USEF's George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session: Peyton Warren and sisters Emma and Gracie Marlowe. The session is designed to identify and develop the next generation of top U.S. Equestrian Team talent through instruction in a variety of aspects of horsemastership.

The 11th annual session was held at Equestrian Village, home of the Global Dressage Festival, in Wellington, Jan. 3-7. Thanks to the Marlowes for providing these day-to-day reports from their experiences.

by Gracie Marlowe

There are not enough words to describe the 2017 George Morris Horsemastership Training Session! This clinic was one of the best experiences of my life so far. I am forever grateful that I was able to participate. I learned so much and had the time of my life! I was able to learn from and ride with some of the top Olympians in the world. From getting on the plane to fly to Wellington, FL, to walking out of the ring after my last Nations Cup round, this was truly the best adventure and educational experience. I found this clinic was a good window into the top of our sport.

Going into this clinic I was very fortunate to have been allowed to borrow Laura Kraut's horse Valdelamadre Centalyon, aka "Smurf." He was absolutely spectacular and I am forever grateful I

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was able to ride him, and with Laura's team. Laura was amazing and everyone was so nice and welcoming. I was able to learn so much from her in such a short amount of time. Her entire team including Laura's sister Mary Elizabeth, her assistant Julie Welles and her grooms are amazing. Their whole operation was inspiring, professional and very well run. It was a privilege to experience their barn first hand. Thank you to Peter Wylde for helping me connect with Laura and find such a nice horse. Thank you Laura Kraut for allowing me to ride Smurf and the lessons you gave me.

Going into the clinic I was beyond excited. I was also very excited to go into the clinic with my sister Emma, who was able to borrow a horse from Eduardo Menezes. It made the experience all the more special. Wellington was absolutely beautiful. I was able to visit so many gorgeous farms both in and out of Grand Prix Village.

January 3

Day one of the clinic we moved our horses into the Global Dressage Equestrian Center. We started out the clinic with a great session from Colleen Reed, our Stable Manager, about horse care and horsemanship. A few hours later we were able to have another session with Janus Marquis about Equine Anatomy and Physiology. I really loved getting to talk with Janus. I had been able to meet her during the Emerging Athletes Program Nationals and really enjoy learning from her. She has so much education about the horse and how it should function; I feel I can never stop learning!

At the Welcome Reception we were able to meet and talk to some of the top professionals in this industry. We were introduced to Andy Thomas who would be evaluating how we rode. His presentation was incredible and made me very interested in exactly how our bodies move when we ride. Lastly, to finish out the day all riders gathered for night check in the barn.

January 4

We did flatwork with Andy watching and evaluating us. We were able to wear special jackets with bright neon strips down the back so Andy was able to watch how we ride from a skeletal standpoint. This was very exciting and I was dying to see what Andy found. That same day our next session involved grooms who work for some of the top barns in the world. I was able to ask Beezie Madden's groom all about what goes on behind the scenes in Beezie's barn. One very exciting thing I learned from her groom was how to braid jumper braids!

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At that time, Andy met back up with each of us and did individual physical assessments. I found out that I am weaker on my right side and tighter on my left. After Andy worked with me, I felt physically better and there was a huge noticeable change in my body. To finish off the day we all had a group session with Tonya Johnston on sports psychology. It was really interesting to look at this sport from a psychological standpoint. I learned about different ways to handle and cope with different stresses related to the show ring. I have to say, after our session I felt much closer with my fellow riders.

January 5

We were able to watch Olympian Anne Kursinski demonstrate correct flatwork on one of her horses. Anne stressed that you need to work with your horse and get into their head to figure out what your horse is thinking. I felt like I could watch her ride for hours.

We then were split into two groups for our flatwork session. I had actually ridden with Anne before in Los Angeles during my Emerging Athletes Regional clinic. Anne has a phenomenal flatwork base, and it is very clear with all her success in the ring. I cannot say enough good things about her. She is so inspiring and really makes you want to be better!

Later that day we were able to meet Beezie and John Madden for the gymnastics theory and course build. I really enjoyed building the course and then riding it the next day.

Finishing off the day we had a session with the amazing veterinarian Tim Ober. I personally loved this session! I love talking to vets and I got a lot of questions answered. He was so nice and was willing to talk about any topics we wanted to discuss.

January 6

We watched Beezie ride and jump the gymnastics course. Anne's flatwork was a great lead into the gymnastics phase of the clinic. Beezie demonstrated correct impulsion, pace and straightness that was needed for the gymnastics. After watching Beezie we rode the gymnastics. I felt I was really able to learn more about my horse and that it was good

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preparation for the next Nations Cup day. I also absolutely loved riding with Beezie. The instruction was incredible and I learned some great exercises.

After our gymnastics session, we all set the Nations Cup course with Laura Kraut and Conrad Homfeld. It was nice to look at the course from the ground up to the horse. This way you can get a good feel of the course before you actually ride it. To finish off the day, the last session was to meet at Laura Kraut's barn for a "Riding for Team USA" meeting.

This was one of my favorite parts of the clinic. We were able to hear from Robert Ridland, Anne Kursinski, Lauren Hough, Laura Kraut and Beezie Madden. Robert explained the process for the Olympic selections and about the Olympic Games in Rio. Everyone talked about what it is like to ride on a team and represent their country. We learned all about the different Olympians paths and how they got where they are today. This was such an inspiring and educational evening. It was a great lead into the Nations Cup Rounds.

January 7

It was finally Nations Cup Round day! My team was Brian Moggre, Taylor St. Jacques, Michael Williamson and myself. We were the Red team and our Chef d'Equipe was Beezie. Walking the course and talking to Beezie was incredible. The knowledge she has is invaluable and I really enjoyed being coached by her.

Having never done anything like this before, the first round was a learning experience for me. I was new to the height and fairly new to jumper rounds in general. After round one, it was very clear what I needed to work on. I had two time faults and two jumping faults. Laura was great at analyzing my course and told me exactly what I needed to do coming back for round two. I left the ring not discouraged at all, but extremely encouraged to get back into the ring and fix it!

I needed to be a lot more efficient with my pace and track. I also needed to be a lot stronger throughout the course, over the oxers, and in the combinations. After round two, I ended up going clear and in the time allowed. I felt accomplished and my second round was much improved. With that said, I still had a lot of things to make better. I still needed to be more efficient and smarter about my track and pace. I still needed to be even stronger and help my horse out more.

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Throughout this clinic I couldn't have asked for a better horse. Smurf was amazing and I learned the most on him than on any other horse. I loved the course and how it rode. I found that Conrad did an amazing job designing the tests and I really enjoyed riding the course.

Again, a huge thank you to everyone involved in making this clinic so successful and enjoyable.

by Emma Marlowe

When I got the email that I was accepted for the clinic, I was ecstatic! I wanted to get accepted into the clinic more than anything. By winning the USHJA's Emerging Athletes Program national training session competition, my sister Gracie got an invitation to the clinic and I really wanted to be able to experience it with her.

I have watched the clinic online for years and always dreamed of participating. My sister and I arrived in Wellington about a week before the clinic and started to get to know our horses. It was amazing, the horses, the farms, the people, etc.

Walking through Grand Prix Village is like Disneyland for horse lovers. Farm after farm of drop-dead amazing facilities. My sister borrowed a horse of Laura Kraut's for the clinic. Gracie and I went to Laura's farm the first day we got to Wellington. First off, let me say Laura and her team are some of the nicest and most professional people you will ever meet. Her farm is beautifully well run, all her staff are so nice, Laura, her sister Mary Elizabeth, and assistant Julie Welles welcomed us with open arms. We rode there throughout the week and learned so much.

I also rode at Eduardo Menezes' farm where the horse I was using for the clinic, Barichelo, was stabled. I want to thank Leslie Steele and Schuyler Riley for their help finding Barichelo and Maeve Scarborough for letting me use him. I cannot thank Schuyler and Eduardo enough for all their help during the week.

January 3

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We moved the horses in, set our stalls and tack rooms up. We met with our barn manager Colleen Reed, who was amazing! We then had an Equine Anatomy & Physiology session with the amazing Janus Marquis. We then had a welcome reception with Andy Tomas, who explained and gave a demonstration on how he focuses on the riders and how you move on a horse. Then we went back for night check and wrapped up the day.

January 4

Morning chores starting at 6:30. We started off the day flatting in small groups with Andy watching for individual assessment. After that we met with some of the top grooms for the biggest riders in the world. That was a lot of fun to ask some inside questions of what really goes on. Kent Farrington's head groom even taught me how to do plaits, which is a lot harder than it looks!

After that we met with Andy again and he went over what he noticed when he watched us ride. Andy has an incredible eye and was dead-on with his findings. I felt a lot more balanced and centered on my horse after working with Andy. Then, more barn chores and met with sports psychologist Tonya Johnston. I've never done any sports psychology but really enjoyed the session with Tonya. We all bonded as a group and talked about ring nerves etc. After this session, it was time again for night check!

January 5

Everyone arrived at 6:30 for morning chores. We started off the day with a flatwork demonstration with Anne Kursinski. Watching Anne ride was amazing, she is an absolute genius on horseback. I was in the same group as my sister for all the sessions, which was super fun! I absolutely loved my horse and really enjoyed the session. Anne likes you to ride in a deeper seat, which was different for me at first but I felt like I got a lot more accomplished in a deeper seat for the flat. Each flat session was 90 minutes but it felt like 30. I loved that Anne changed it up so much so you were never doing the same thing for more than a lap or two. It really kept not only my focus, but also my horse's focus. I didn't get stuck on one thing for too long.

The next session for the day was Gymnastics Theory and Build with Bezie and John Madden.

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I've always had to set courses but never to the detail John and Beezie do. It was interesting how much thought and measuring goes into building gymnastics.

Veterinary care with Dr. Time Ober came next. This was one of my favorite sessions! I love being involved in the veterinary care of my horses and I always find it interesting. I always learn something new from watching a vet check or seeing an ultrasound, etc. Tim was so nice and answered all my questions. I learned a lot of new things, one being how helpful it could be to ride your horse on soft ground and hard ground. Also, what really causes a suspensory in horses. Next, it was barn chores for the rest of the day until night check at 9:00.

January 6

Everyone arrived for morning chores. Beezie started off the first session with a gymnastics demonstration. It was an honor to watch Beezie ride but even more of an honor to clinic with her. The gymnastics were difficult but Beezie gave a perfect demonstration ride. After watching the first group have their session I had an idea of how everything rode but was excited to do it myself. I loved that we got to practice the water, as it's not my favorite obstacle. Beezie had set up a "curve," which was three jumps set as a tight one stride that we bended to after the water. It was a test as to whether you could get your horse back in time. I felt very confident after my session with Beezie.

The next session was Course Design Theory and Build with Laura Kraut and Conrad Homfeld. Setting the Nations Cup course was a very cool experience. I thought Conrad designed an incredible course and I loved riding it.

Next: afternoon barn chores!

The last session for the day was probably one of my favorite sessions for the entire clinic: Riding for Team USA with Anne Kursinski, Laura Kraut, Lauren Hough, Beezie Madden, and Robert Ridland.

This was so inspiring! Robert explained the Olympic selection process and what you need to do to even be considered for the Olympics. He talked a lot about Nations Cup teams and how to be

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a part of them. Anne, Laura, Lauren and Beezie all gave their life stories and how they got to where they are today. I loved hearing everyone's different paths and how they became so successful. It only gave me more determination to work hard and achieve my dreams. Last but not least: night check at 9:00.

January 7

Nations Cup day! Started off the morning at 5:30am with barn chores and organizing everything. Nations Cup round 1 started at 8:00 so all the horses had to be up at the ring and ready by 7:30. My teams chef d'equipe was Lauren Hough, which was again a huge honor! Lauren is amazing and so much fun to work with. I had a great warm up and went in and had so much fun! I'm not one to get nervous before going into the ring. I always ride my best when I just go in and ride from feel and not get too much in my head. I had a great round with one unlucky rail down at the last combination but I was super happy with my first round. The time was tight but I love going fast so it wasn't too hard for me to stay within the time.

The next round I really wanted to try to ride the same track and prove I could be consistent. Our team was in second place so I knew a clear round would really help. This time I had the hind rail of fence three down. My horse jumped quite high over it and I just didn't get him all the way across. He jumped a beautiful rest of the round even faster than my first round. Overall, I was very happy with both my rounds, I didn't know my horse very well but he was unbelievably good. My team ultimately finished second with only one more rail down than the winning team. Everyone on my team improved in their second round and I think that's pretty much all we could have asked for.

The above is pretty much a summary of the five-day clinic, I could go on and on for hours about how amazing each day was. It was truly an experience of a lifetime. I cannot thank USET Foundation and USEF enough for giving me the opportunity to participate.

Huge thank you to all the sponsors and clinicians who were apart of the 2017 George Morris Horsemastership Clinic.