

# A Rewarding Experience

By Lizzie Kennelly, winner of the SEDA scholarship for juniors

As dressage riders, we all know that training a dressage horse can be a frustrating task; working day after day to accomplish personal goals while in the saddle. Most of the time, great work leads to great results. My horse, Cayenne, and I put hours of effort each week into achieving roundness — a natural ability for some horses and a barrier for others. Cayenne has always been an amazing partner, and he has the best work ethic of any horse in the world. But, I soon realized that in order to become a First Level team, we needed more than our everyday workouts. I admit I was starting to lose hope that my dream of moving up would ever be a reality. Fortunately, this summer I received the large envelope containing my key to success — my SEDA scholarship.

My trainer, Ms. Lisa Head, recommended that I work with clinician Anne Hornbeak. After my weekend with Ms. Hornbeak, I have learned more than exercises and the importance of suppleness and flexibility.

Upon arriving at Hornbeak Stables, another rider was training with Ms. Hornbeak in her covered arena. This horse and rider performed beautifully, and I was slightly intimidated by their performance.

When I mounted Cayenne, Ms. Hornbeak watched him and immediately saw my predicament. To my surprise, right away she knew what to do in order to help me achieve a First Level frame. She taught me that the most important step missing in my training is getting him to

use the correct muscles and come over his back and through his neck.

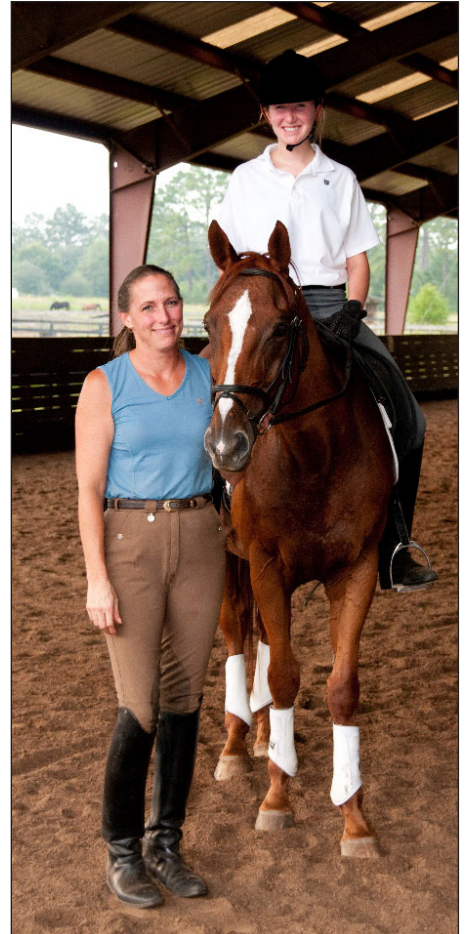
We practiced a lot of dramatic bending to the inside and out, which forced him to submit his jaw and break at the poll. Circles, direction changes, and lateral work really helped get Cayenne moving over his back. I was so impressed — I never knew my horse could move so beautifully!

We had finally felt that “ah-ha!” moment that dressage riders strive to grasp. The hard work we’ve put in for the past few years finally pieced together, and now I can move on to succeeding in the show ring, hopefully moving up to First Level very soon.

Along with this incredible riding experience, I got to watch other beautiful dressage riders. Coming from a hunter/jumper barn, I very rarely get to see riders of my discipline. Simply watching these horses broadened my experience as a dressage rider. Though they looked wonderful, I became more confident in knowing that that even these great riders have difficulties with their training.

After being trained by Ms. Anne, combining her techniques with what I’ve learned over the years from Ms. Lisa has fit together like a puzzle, and that weekend was more educational to me than any other riding experience I’ve ever had.

The amazing thing about dressage is, no matter how hard we work, there is always something that can be improved. After this clinic, I learned that the things that once seemed impossible CAN be



Lizzie Kennelly aboard Cayenne with clinician Anne Hornbeak.

achieved. I would certainly say that Ms. Anne Hornbeak changed me as a rider, both physically and mentally.

Though I’m only a teenager, I’ve realized the importance of having a goal. The never-ending goals embedded in this sport we all love gives us the most amazing sense of accomplishment. The opportunity to be a part of this clinic was such a rewarding experience, and I’m blessed to have been a part of it.

Thank you so much, SEDA, for giving me this opportunity! ♣