

# A Great Learning Opportunity

By Alex Varisco

Thank you, SEDA Scholarship Committee, for selecting me as the SEDA Jr/YR Scholarship recipient. I decided to use my scholarship to attend the Jim Wofford Clinic at Hunter's Bluff on December 16, 2008. I rode my gelding, Appy Go Lucky.

We started our lesson by trotting over ground poles and cross rails. Our focus was on taking even steps and keeping a consistent pace through the obstacles. This was challenging for me because Appy tends to get flat, and I really had to shorten his steps.

Next, we trotted and cantered a cross rail and vertical line. Mr. Jim emphasized the need to look straight ahead over the jump and never look down because it throws you and your horse off balance over the jump.

Then, we advanced to a gymnastic which consisted of a series of three jumps spread one or two strides apart. We went through this a couple of times, focusing on taking off in the correct spot and working on my leg position. Mr. Jim commented on my right leg (my weaker side) and how it slid back over the jumps. He told me that the correct angle of your foot in the stirrup was the same angle you walk on. This reminder will definitely help me keep my leg in place. As I walked back to my trainer, I received a look and the famous, "I told you so!"

Mr. Jim then went into the discussion of how equestrians are athletes of great precision, but we become lazy. He recommended that we should work out and stay physically in shape. He told me that exercising my legs will help them become stronger and my right leg will strengthen.

Towards the end of my lesson, we started

riding courses. Our first course began with a few verticals, and we were to circle after each jump. This was challenging because it made you think about where your jumps were and how to set yourself up correctly. It made me very aware of Appy's pace and body. I had to keep a consistent pace to the jump, and I used the circle after to set Appy up correctly for the lead, transition, or to balance him. I also had to use my hips, shoulders, and seat bones to control Appy's body and hindquarters.

Mr. Jim stressed that our pace to and after the jump was most important, and he said that you should hear hoofbeats striking evenly throughout the whole course.

The last course consisted of the same exercises, but with lines and roll back turns. There were also changes of direction and many tiring circles. As we continued, it became less difficult and we were making transitions with ease!

I had a great time at the Wofford clinic and it was an amazing experience for me. I hope that many more young riders will be given the chance for this amazing opportunity! ♣



Alex Varisco and Appy Go Lucky at the Jim Wofford clinic.