

Maryland Pony Clubbers Perfect Fundamentals of Equitation with Stacia Klein Madden

By Molly Sorge/Jump Media

As you watched Penelope Roesler during her session with Stacia Klein Madden, you could see her assurance grow. From struggling to get a prompt canter transition from her horse Fleetwood Mac and having some awkward fences, Roesler, 16, from Dayton, MD moved on to effective transitions and navigating simple courses.

She was just one of the Iron Bridge Hounds Pony Club (IBHPC) riders who benefited from Madden's teaching during the Washington International Horse Show's (WIHS) "Fundamentals of Equitation with Stacia Klein Madden" Barn Night Clinic, presented by Barn Manager, on April 27 at Fine Idea Farm in Mt. Airy, MD. Madden, a top hunter, jumper, and equitation trainer, had traveled from her Beacon Hill Show Stables in New Jersey to teach the Pony Clubbers.

"Penelope had a huge confidence boost," said her mother Carrie Roesler. "She's just started to ride that horse after being on a little pony. Two weeks ago, she was barely cantering on him, even though she'd been jumping big jumps on her pony. I think the transition [from pony to horse] was very frustrating for her, so this has been a huge confidence booster for her." Roesler added that when Madden said, "You're going to jump all these jumps and canter to them," she saw her daughter's eyes widen. "But I think she needed that push, and I think she's taking home a lot of confidence. Stacia being very direct with her is exactly what she needed," Roesler concluded.

The IBHPC riders earned the clinic with Madden by winning the Group Video Contest during the BarnManager-sponsored Barn Night, at the 2018 WIHS. The 11 IBHPC riders in the clinic ranged in ages from seven to 16, and in level from walk-trot to jumping three-foot.

"It's amazing; they would have never had this opportunity if it wasn't for the Washington International Horse Show and BarnManager people putting it together for us," said Roesler. "I can't imagine trying to put this together on our own as a small Pony Club. It's not the same as being in a big barn setting where they have clinics all the time. We have some amazing instructors, but somebody like Stacia is definitely the next level. I was impressed how she tailored each lesson to what she saw in the first five minutes and was able to correct some things that the girls have been working on for a really long time. It means a lot to them."

Madden worked on solidifying the riders' basics, focusing on effective riding that got the desired results from their horses. She used rails on the ground as well as jumps to help further the riders' sense of pace, straightness, and track.

It's the Basics

"It comes down to basics. The basics are the same, whether you're teaching somebody to be on a horse for the first time,



Stacia Kline Madden traveled from Beacon Hill Stable in New Jersey to Mt. Airy, MD to conduct a clinic for members of the Iron Bridge Hounds Pony Club, whose video was chosen as the winner of the prize during Barn Night at the 2018 Washington International Horse Show. Photo credit: Jump Media

or whether you're trying to win a national championship," said Madden. "It's just levels and degrees of what you're trying to fine-tune. There's so much you're

trying to teach at this level, so it's a lot of fun to be able to get to the bottom of what some of these kids' problems have been and see if you can scratch the surface of

improving them in the hour that you have working with them."

Madden taught five groups of the IBHPC riders and used a variety of exercises with each group. She had many of the riders practice canter-halt transitions, stressing the proper position of

their hands and seat, and insisting that the horses obey the riders' aids quickly. Having the horses respond promptly to the riders' aids was a theme of Madden's teaching. "Horses don't know

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Maryland Pony Clubbers

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the difference between right and wrong, so we have to give them very clear corrections and rewards to teach them what's right," Madden advised the riders.

Halting in a straight line after the fence was also an exercise Madden used in multiple sessions, and the IBHPC riders brought it up as an especially useful tool. Grace Strosnider, 16, of Brinklow, MD had a keen horse on her hands with her Brandy, and she showed marked improvement in control of Brandy's pace during her lesson.

"The going straight and halting after the jumps really helped me, because my horse tends to take off after the jumps. That helped her stay calm," Strosnider said. "She said a lot of the same stuff we've been working on, but I think it was good to hear it in another way."

Strosnider also appreciated Madden's range of exercises. "I liked how it wasn't repeating the same things over and over; she changed it up. That was really helpful," she said.

"At home, I tend to repeat the same exercises over and over, but now I think I'll have some new ideas. It was cool to ride with someone who has helped people at very high levels."

Cavaletti Work

Madden showed just how versatile and effective rails on the ground can be when she had the riders not just trot over the rails but alternate between posting trot over the rails and sitting the trot between them, then had them practice downward transitions in the space between the rails. Both exercises helped the riders develop a half-halt that controlled the pace.

"You can get a lot done with rails on the ground," Madden said. "You want your horse to have a long, healthy career. I have multiple horses in my barn in their 20s, still sound and showing. You do that by saving their legs and not always jumping. You can keep a horse pretty fit over cavaletti, and they're a great way to work on riders' skills as well."

"Cavaletti work prepares you for jumping and gives you the skills to be ready to jump. There are a gazillion things you can do over cavaletti. Get creative with them and figure out what would help you and your horse," Madden continued.

Established in 1958, the Washington International Horse Show is one of North America's most prestigious and entertaining equestrian events, attracting more than 26,000 spectators annually to Washington, D.C., for Olympic-level competition plus community and charity events. Find out more, including information on the Barn Night contests, at WIHS.org. BarnManager is a cloud-based software solution that provides horse owners and managers with the tools they need to streamline and simplify their daily management responsibilities. Find out more about BarnManager and get a free demo at BarnManager.com.

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