



NEWS & EVENTS

## FEI dressage instructor visits Salem Equestrian Center

● By K. MICHELLE WADLEY



*Heather Barboza schools during a recent dressage clinic at the Salem Equestrian Center in Benton, Ark.*

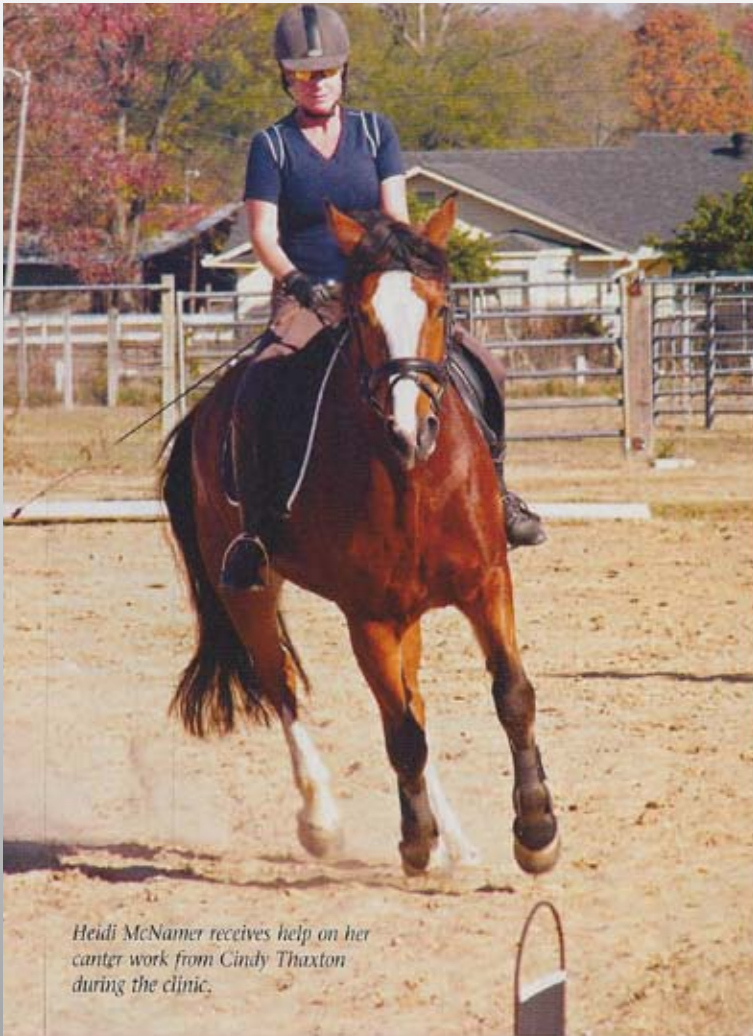


here is a gentle balance between the inside aids and the outside aids. It is the rider's responsibility to maintain that balance."

These words were the on-going theme of the dressage clinic given Nov. 12-14 at Salem Equestrian Center in Benton, Ark., by Cindy Thaxton, a United States Dressage Federation certified instructor who is headquartered in Watkinsville, Ga., just outside of Atlanta.

Harmony and balance between horse and rider are common themes throughout Thaxton's instruction. Several riders were having trouble with their canter work. She reminded them of the simple but important concept of how the horse must be able to pick its feet up off the ground.

*Continued on next page*



*Heidi McNamer receives help on her canter work from Cindy Thaxton during the clinic.*

**“There is gentle balance between the inside aids and the outside aids. It is the rider’s responsibility to maintain that balance.”**

— Cindy Thaxton

## DRESSAGE CLINIC

Continued from previous page

“If the rider’s legs and arms are restrictive, the horse can’t get the jump it needs for a correct canter depart,” she said.

Thaxton went on to explain the correlation between the different parts of the horse’s body, such as its shoulder and how the rider’s legs and/or arms can restrict the movement of that shoulder, which can in turn affect the canter depart. A rider’s arm has to make the same arc the horse’s scapula makes as it rises into the canter. If the rider’s inside arm is pulling the horse cannot get that arc.

An accomplished rider since the age of 6, Thaxton started her riding career in hunters, equitation and junior jumpers before moving on to the sport of dressage. She has earned both her bronze and silver medals from the USDF and has coached numerous students who have earned them as well.

For seven years she served as Region Three Advanced Young Rider Coordinator and was also elected the Region Three Dressage Team Chef d’Equipe for 5 North American Young Rider Championships. She has also served as the coach for the Cayman Islands dressage team that represented that country in the FEI World Dressage Challenge, which functions to further the sport of dressage in countries where the sport is being developed. Thaxton coached that same country’s representative this year at the XXI Central American and Caribbean Games.

Even though the weather on Saturday turned out to be cold and miserable, Thaxton coached a record number of students from the first light of day into the evening, all eager to learn from such an accomplished teacher who is encouraging even when being challenging.

One of the most popular exercises of the weekend was one involving riding the shape of a diamond rather than the commonly used 20-meter circle. The idea of the exercise was to force the rider to focus on specific points in the arena in order to get more of a correct bend and to teach straightness on a circle. Once the diamond was mastered, the circle felt like a walk in the park. The exercise was particularly helpful for anyone struggling to produce better balance in the trot and canter.

Thaxton will be returning to Salem Equestrian Center several times throughout the next year. The next clinic will be Jan. 14-16. Auditing is welcome and free. If you are interested in riding or would like to know more about Cindy or the clinic, please call Paula Dean of Lucky 13 Sport Horses at 501-744-1320. [U](#)