

Eventing Icon Shares Her Knowledge

By Cathrine Wunderlich

Photos in article by XpressFoto

Karen O'Connor is not only an American eventing icon, she is an incredible instructor, mentor and a wealth of knowledge. I've now had the privilege of riding in two of her clinics, auditing three clinics, and observing a handful of private lessons over the past few years. I have never ceased to be amazed by what I learn each and every time from Karen, and how she inspires me to be a better rider for myself and my horse.

First and fore-most, Karen's devotion lies with the safety and well being of the horse. If the horse is safe, then the rider is safe. The rider must be fair to the horse, both physically and mentally.

It's always the rider's responsibility to implement the four principles when jumping:

- Direction
- Speed
- Balance
- Rhythm/Tempo

Additionally, it's important to understand the correct "approach" to jumping and how to apply these principles. The four principles and their application are discussed at the beginning of each of Karen's stadium jumping clinic groups; the technicality of the discussion is dependent on the level of the riders.

The first principle, *Direction*, sets the horse up for success so that the horse clearly understands the jump "question" being asked and has time to process it. The horse needs to see the jump, be able to understand the

height, width and effort needed. The horse also needs to understand what is on the back-side of the jump, and that they will be safe. If *Direction* is not well established, a refusal or run-out has a higher potential of occurring. Straight (intentional) lines to the center of the jump effort are extremely important in the training of the horse and rider.



In this competition photo, Cathy is in the galloping position —a forward seat with her hands in a half bridge and on the horse's neck.

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Eventing Continued

Depending on the level of the rider/horse combination, perpendicular or angled approaches may be appropriate—but the direction must still be intentional and well established.

The second principle, *Speed*, must be appropriate for the jump question, terrain and education of the horse. For a younger and greener horse, a slower speed allows them to process the height, width, terrain and effort needed. These jumps tend to be ridden “out of stride,” so a relaxed and rewarding effort can be had for the horse. The speed of the gait and effort the horse has coming into the front side of the jump are what you can expect to have on the back side. As a result, more challenging efforts—such as combinations in stadium or on cross country—require a deliberate shortened, powerful and packaged canter stride.

Balance is the third principle of jumping. The basic training of the horse in dressage is what prepares the horse to have the balance,

strength and rideability for jumping, both in show jumping and cross-country. When riding cross country, there are three different seats that directly impact the balance and movement of the horse: the **forward** seat (two-point), the **half-seat** (three-point), and the **full** seat.

In a forward seat, the rider’s weight is fully out of the saddle with the upper body balanced over a secure lower leg with the weight in the stirrup irons. In a half-seat, the rider’s weight is evenly distributed between the stirrup irons and the thigh and seat. In a full-seat, the rider’s weight is more in the saddle, but with the upper body inclined slightly forward and centered over a secure lower leg, with some weight still in the stirrups. During stadium jumping, primarily the half-seat is used. While riding cross-country, there is sufficient time to use all three seats when galloping between jumps, preparing for the jump approach and then through the approach and execution of the jump.

In the lower levels (Starter and Beginner Novice), the full seat is

seldom needed. As the complexity of the combinations increases, the jumps get narrower and there are “up” and “down” efforts, so the full seat becomes necessary to ride accurately.

In addition to the three seats, there are different positions which are applied when riding cross-country: the **galloping** position, the **rebalancing** (preparation) position, the **approach** position, and the **jumping** position. These positions and the timing of their application are discussed at the beginning of each of Karen’s cross country jumping clinic groups.

The galloping position is used when there are longer distances between jump efforts, with the rider in a forward seat—their weight is up and out of the saddle, balanced over a secure lower leg. This position allows the horse to be free in their balance with minimal distraction from the rider. Karen encourages the rider to place their hands on the top of horse’s neck with a half bridge in the reins.

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Kathy galloping cross country

Eventing Continued

The rebalancing (preparation) position generally occurs six or more strides ahead of the jump to adjust the horse's length of stride and balance. The timing is dependent on the individual horse's ease of adjustability, the type of fence or question, the degree of accuracy required, and the influence of the terrain in the approach and on landing. Karen helps riders visualize the rebalancing position by referring to it as "setting your sail"—the rider's upper body comes more upright, which in turn changes the position of their weight and center of gravity. The horse responds by changing the stride length, increasing the hind end engagement and lightening the forehand for the upcoming obstacle.

The approach position is based on the half-seat or full-seat and is dependent on the type of fence and the shape of the face of the fence (upright, sloped), as well as the degree of accuracy and the

influence of terrain. The rider should maintain a consistent speed, balance and rhythm generated during the approach phase.

The jumping position is a variation of the half-seat, depending on the type of fence or question, degree of accuracy and terrain influence. The rider should remain in connection and communication with the horse in the air through leg and weight aids, and by maintaining an elastic contact with the horse's mouth, without restricting the jumping effort or balancing against the horse's mouth.

Finally, *rhythm/tempo* is the fourth principle of jumping, which means the timing and pattern of the horse's footfalls. The timing of the footfalls should remain consistent, especially during the approach phase (or zone) of the jump (approximately the last six strides before the jump). Keeping a consistent rhythm allows the rider to see their distance to the base of the jump much easier and farther out ahead of the jump, which

informs a rider when to begin rebalancing and ride the approach. This becomes incredibly important when there are jump combinations, to successfully navigate the striding that is intended and ensure an accurate ride. When you are transitioning from the galloping position, to the rebalancing position, through the approach, listen to the rhythm of the footfalls. You will feel your horse's balance change, but the sound of their footfalls should not change.

By participating in clinics with Karen, both as an auditor and a rider, you are able to really learn the system Karen teaches. You can see it as other riders practice (and make mistakes), and then put it into practice yourself (and make mistakes). It is really incredible to see what a difference having all the right pieces and putting them together makes, from beginning to end. I encourage any eventing rider that really wants to master their skill to participate in a Karen O'Connor clinic—they are life changers!





Caryn Vesperman Editor

All advertisements, articles and photographs (with photo release) should be submitted by the 15th of the preceding month of publication, unless you make prior arrangements for additional time.

Calendar of events will appear in both the eQuarter and on the WDCTA website.

Payment for advertisements should be submitted via PayPal through the WDCTA website (wdcta.org) or mailed with a check made out to WDCTA and mailed to the editor.

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Basics, It's Always Dressage Basics, No Matter the Discipline

My niece is visiting from California and as interested in horses as I was at 16 years old. At that age, you're still balancing school, homework, social activities, sports. (She is a pole vaulter and does 100 and 300 hurdles), yet still tries to get to her riding lessons as often as possible.

She's into jumping, and when she visits me, she has to do some dressage. (And, we trail ride.) Since I saw her a year ago, she has improved so much in her confidence and balance, thanks to her jumping instructor. I told her that her jumping has advanced beyond my skills to set jumps and offer appropriate advice! But, she has asked me to help her with dressage. I was reminded of her statement a couple of years ago when I was helping her with dressage and a few beginner jumping lessons. She was doing a good job jumping, except she didn't quite get straight to a jump, her horse felt her indecision...and ran out. She almost fell off. She looked at me and said, "Aunt Caryn, now I know why you said dressage was so important." (Warmed my heart, right?!)

We've also had a great time trail riding, and visiting UW college campuses. She has a few universities on her list, but is interested in UW-Madison or UW-Platteville because of her area of interest. With her focus on a career and horses, she's like a "Mini Me." Not having any kids, it's really fun for me to have her around (and she tells her Aunt more than her mother, like I did when I was a kid too!).

Enjoy the basics, build the foundation, stay patient. The pay-off is a better and skilled partnership.

Until next month, stay safe and stay on!

Caryn

CLASSIFIED AD

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OLYMPIC DRESSAGE RIDER, LAURA GRAVES, COMING TO MADISON!

May 20-21, 2023
Alliant Energy Center

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Date!



Laura Graves started out with a pony and a dream. Later, with determination, work and a horse she bought as a foal off a video, she became an international rider, representing the United States at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro (earning a Bronze team medal) and numerous World Cup Finals all over the world. She was also ranked #1 in the world with a record-breaking musical freestyle performance.

Eight riders will be selected to ride, and auditors will enjoy the clinic, as well as shopping at the vendor fair—all under one roof at the climate-controlled venue, the Alliant Energy Center.

For more information on applying to ride, auditor registration, and being a sponsor or vendor at this event, follow the WDCTA Facebook pages and the WDCTA website at wdcta.org.

Join WDCTA and receive discount fees for this event, as well as updates in the WDCTA monthly newsletter.

This event sponsored by

WISCONSIN
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“Help GROW Our GMO!” Drawing

**WDCTA is looking for new members!
You can help and earn a chance to be rewarded!**

You can earn one chance to win the drawing for each new member you refer who joins WDCTA by Sept. 25, 2022. The prize for the 2021 Grow Our GMO drawing is a dressage pad with the WDCTA logo.

Growing Together

Rules for the drawing:

1. A “new” member is defined as someone who was not a WDCTA member in 2021.
2. The new member must include your name as their Referring Person on their membership form when they send it in.
3. We will not be adding referral names retroactively, after the membership form has already been submitted.
4. Referring members must be current 2022 adult members of WDCTA to qualify for this drawing.
5. New members who joined before this announcement, who already included the name of their referring member, will automatically have their referring member’s name included in the drawing.
6. Successful referral of one Individual or Business membership will give you one chance in the drawing. Successful referral of a Junior or Young Rider (they must give their birth date on their application form!) will earn you two chances in the drawing. A successful Family membership will earn you one chance for the new adult members plus two chances for each qualifying Junior or Young Rider. (Again, birth dates are required for Juniors and Young Riders.)
7. Junior and Young Riders must include their birth dates on their application form when they send it in.
8. There is no limit to how many entries you can earn by successful referrals of new people who join WDCTA.
9. All new memberships and payments must be received *no later than Sept. 25, 2022!*

**Talk to your friends and boarding buddies who may be interested in the many benefits of being a WDCTA member.
Encourage them to join! You could be our winner!**

Dressage Horse Boarding Eagle, WI



Tailwind Farm is a premier dressage facility.

Amenties include:

Heated barn and tack room. 12x12 matted stalls with automatic waterers. Grain AM and PM, hay fed 4 times daily. Daily turnout in spacious dry lots and attached pastures are used weather permitting.

Warm 60'x150' indoor arena with well maintained footing. 2 outdoor arenas, one sand and one grass standard dressage arena.


This 30 acre farm has trails surrounding the property and hay field, also with in a short distance of the Kettle Moraine trail system.

Training and lessons provided by Andrea Schten. Andrea is a USDF Gold, Silver and Bronze medalist on self- trained horses. Multiple students have also obtained their USDF medals under her tutelage.

Please contact Andrea Schten for more information. Call or text 262-470-4557, email: aschten@hotmail.com

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Contact Andrea at:

(262) 470-4557

aschten2000@yahoo.com

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Calendar of Events

WDCTA Events

May 20-21, 2023

Laura Graves Symposium
Sponsored by the WDCTA
Southwest Chapter
Location: Alliant Energy Center

Other Events

Sept. 8-11

Region 4 Regional
Championships
National Equestrian Center
Lake St. Louis, MO

Sept. 14-18

Region 2 Regional
Championships
Waterloo Hunt Club
Grass Lake, MI

Nov. 10-13

US Dressage Finals
Kentucky Horse Park
Lexington, KY

Member Listings

STABLES

Grand Prix Farm
Jackie Luebke-Puetz
15034 Co. Rd. X
Kiel, WI 53042-9706
cvestor@aol.com
(920) 693-3367

Indoor arena w/ mirrors, heated barn and bathroom, H/C wash stall, screened facility, all turnout in PVC fencing—no bugs! Limited openings for boarders. Trails. Lessons available. No drama queens.

Lindinhof Equine Sports Zentrum
Megan McIsaac
4246 Schneider Drive
Oregon, WI 53575
lindinhofllc@gmail.com
(608) 445-8531

80x200' heated indoor w/ mirrors. New stalls and client tack room w/ individual lockers. Individual and group turnout. Wash stall. Solarium. Theraplate. Numerous trails. Individual training programs. Lessons and leasing options on FEI school horses, month training for horses and riders. FEI trainer on site.

Tailwind Farm
Andrea Schten
W350S6890 Ulrickson Road
Eagle, WI 53119
(262) 470-4557
aschten@hotmail.com
www.andreaschten.com

Heated barn and tack room, dry lots and large pastures. H/C wash stall, 10 x 12' stalls, Theraplate, indoor and outdoor arenas.

BREEDERS

Jackie Luebke-Puetz
15034 Co. Rd. X
Kiel, WI 53042-9706
cvestor@aol.com
(920) 693-3367

Standing Section B Welsh stallion, Too Cute to Shoot, bay, 13.2 h, cuter than a bug's ear and several times qualified for USDF breeding championships. In 2018, was third in halter for Welsh Association.

Tracey Dikkers - USEF/USDF "r" Judge
W4835 Aspen Court
Wild Rose, WI 54984
(608) 220-2628

USDF Silver & Bronze medals. USDF/USEF licensed dressage "r" judge. Available to judge USEF/USDF dressage shows, clinics and lessons.

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Caryn Vesperman - USEF/USDF "r" Judge
W1619 King Road
Brooklyn, WI 53521
touchstonefarm@gmail.com
(608) 455-2208

USDF Gold, Silver and Bronze medalist. Shown through Grand Prix. Available for USEF/USDF-recognized dressage and eventing shows and schooling shows.

*

Member Listings

INSTRUCTORS

Tracey Dikkers

**W4835 Aspen Court
Wild Rose, WI 54984
(608) 220-2628**

USEF/USDF Silver and Bronze medalist on self-trained horses, trained through FEI. 25+ years of experience training and instructing. Will teach beginners to FEI. Will travel.

Jackie Luebke-Puetz

**15034 Co. Rd. X
Kiel, WI 53042-9706
cvestor@aol.com
(920) 693-3367**

Will teach through 2nd level, earned USDF Bronze medal, trained through 4th Level. Served in the past on USDF education committee, USEF steward. Will travel.

Megan McIsaac

**Lindinhof Equine Sports Zentrum
4246 Schneider Drive
Oregon, WI 53575
lindinhofllc@gmail.com
(608) 445-8531**

FEI trainer, USDF-certified instructor thru 4th Level, 2014 national champion with Kingsley. USDF Gold, Silver, Bronze medalist, all USDF bars. Competed four horses at GP. Competed successfully at Dressage at Devon and West Coast Festival. Year-end USDF, USEF, WDCTA awards. 15+ years teaching experience. Students competed through GP, earned rider awards and medals. Travel for lessons and clinics.

Andrea Schten

**W350S6890 Ulrickson Road
Eagle, WI 53119
(262) 470-4557
aschten@hotmail.com
www.andreaschten.com**

USDF Bronze, Silver and Gold medalist, regional championships: Training through Grand Prix on self-trained horses. Multiple students have earned Bronze and Silver medals. Schoolmasters available. Trailering in for lessons welcome. Available for clinics; travel for lessons.

Kate Van Sicklen

**110 Merrill Crest Drive
Madison, WI 53705
katherinevansicklen@gmail.com
(608) 669-0148**

40+ years of teaching experience. British Horse Society instructor certification. USDF "L" graduate with distinction. USDF Associate Certified Instructor. USDF Silver Medal. Shown through Prix St. George. Will teach through 4th Level. Specialize in teaching horses and riders correct basics. Will travel.