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Sonoma County Events

Cavaletti Clinics

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I am originally from Gothenburg, Sweden. I started riding when I was seven and at that age knew already that horses were going to be part of my life forever. I was determined to make a career out of my love for horses and made it happen by attending the Flyinge National Stud Academy. I also had the opportunity to work in New Zealand for a year starting and educating young horses for Dressage. After New Zealand I went to Germany and was an auction rider for the Hanoverian Society for three years. In 1997 I was invited by Fred and Peggy Furth to come to California to work as their personal Dressage trainer at the Chalk Hill Winery. I am now working as the head Dressage trainer at Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC).



Besides teaching lessons, and training horses, I offer a cavaletti clinic once a month at SREC. The cavaletti clinics are open to, and draw, riders from all disciplines —Dressage to Reining, and I welcome all levels of riders. All breeds are welcome as well, from Warmbloods to Quarter Horses. Recently I learned a great deal from a Missouri Fox Trotter, never having worked with a gaited horse before. One rider brought a mule and he was an excellent student!

Cavaletti training was developed in Italy around 1930. In the style of the Italian school, groups of riders used four cavalettis to help loosen their horses up every day before working them. The riders traversed the poles in walk and rising trot for about ten to fifteen minutes. Traditionally, the riders worked in groups of eight to ten young horses, riding one or two horse lengths apart. The distance between the second and third cavalettis was doubled to accommodate differing stride lengths. Horses benefited by learning to increase their bend at the front knees and hocks, resulting in increased mobility and even increased joint fluidity. Using cavalettis helps horses learn to move correctly. Suspension in their gaits improves, and they learn regularity and rhythm. They learn to go in a straight line. Their top lines and backs get stronger. Loosening and working the horses' backs in this way can be beneficial in not only Dressage, but also jumping and Cross Country training, as well as

Appropriate tempo helps the horse use his back correctly over the poles

The cavalettis encourage riding in a straight line

Western disciplines. The physical effort and strength required to trot over the poles are substantial, but the work is very rewarding. These clinics are useful for old and young horses, and can really help a horse that is rehabbing from an injury. We watch all the horses carefully, and only go as far as the horse feels comfortable. When I was teaching in Sweden I called this the "body pump" because it is like to going to the gym for a horse.

What about the riders? Would you like to have fun while giving your horse a great workout? Unlike the old Italian tradition, in my clinics each horse and rider traverses the cavalettis alone. I teach small clinics of four riders and I group them based on the stride length of the horse. We start normally with four poles, lifted at alternating ends, making the middle the low point. This encourages the horse and rider to go straight, which is the easiest route. Riders can start at a walk, if they wish. Then we gradually increase the number of poles one at a time until the horse lets us know he is tired. Two of the most common issues are straightness and keeping the tempo slow. I enjoy watching the riders learn to find the correct tempo to "swing" over the poles, and cue their horses from their own bodies. We all can just see the happiness in the horses and riders when they figure it out and go in the right tempo and the right frame.

I love to do the cavalettis because I know that it is always going to be a fun exercise for both the horse and rider. They work together in a real partnership, and I can see the build up of confidence after they have done their first clinic. I film the riders during their last two runs over the cavalettis so they can see themselves riding and learn from it. I send the videos to the participants.

Even if you don't have a horse, please come by and watch the clinic and see what we are up to. The cavaletti clinics are as fun to watch as they are to ride in! Each is forty-five minutes long. I bet you get hooked! For more information about the cavaletti clinics, visit the SREC website at www.srequestrian.com, or email me at ejdressage@me.com.

