



Rudolf Rostek Brings Age-Old Principles of Riding to Michigan

By Jorie Sligh, Clinic Organizer

Temperatures were oh-so-high, but spirits were even higher during the ADA-sponsored clinic with Spanish Riding School Bereiter Rudolf Rostek July 13 – 16.

Judging from the emails and notes received after the clinic, and the evaluation forms turned in by auditors and riders, the clinic was a huge educational success. As a bonus, the clinic made money to add to ADA's educational fund.

"It's okay. You have time."

Over the four day clinic, an audience of over 200 auditors, riders, and grooms from Michigan as well as California, Georgia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois toughed out the heat wave that turned West Michigan into a steamy sauna. Riders, grooms and horses sweated and worked hard... auditors listened intently and took notes... and Sheila Murdoch and the staff at Jubilee Farm rolled out the red carpet to keep things moving as smoothly and comfortably as possible for everyone.

So why would so many people, some of them

traveling long distances, happily sit and ride in record-breaking temps during an extremely busy time of year to learn from a Bereiter from the Spanish Riding School? What makes the Spanish Riding School so special?

The Mecca of Dressage

"We must live for the School. Offer our lives to it! Then, perhaps, little by little, the light will grow from the tiny candle we keep lit here, and the great art – of the haute école – will not be snuffed out."

– Alois Podhajsky, Director of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna from 1939 – 1965



Rudi Rostek weathers the heat

Those passionate words embody the feelings the Bereiters have for their horses and the art of

dressage. The SRS has been famous for centuries as the world's foremost institution of classical equitation, and where dressage has been practiced and refined on magnificent Lipizzaner stallions for over 430 years.

"This is the work you must do every time!"

Boys enter the School at age 15 or 16 to attempt to become Bereiters - a commitment that, if all goes well, will be their career for the majority of their lives.

Training is intense - going through medical school and residency in this country takes less time than becoming a SRS Bereiter! They spend six months on the longe before even being allowed to pick up the reins. That is followed by several years, day in and day out, at least 40 hours a week, of intensive studying and schooling on highly trained Lipizzaner stallions under the watchful and exacting eyes of SRS Bereiters. After approximately 10 to 12 years, if the student survives the examinations and evaluations (85% do not), demonstrates that they can not only ride but can also teach others, and trains a young stallion all the way up to Grand Prix/High

School level, they earn the title of Bereiter – “Rider” – of the Spanish Riding School.

There are currently one First Chief Rider, two Chief Riders, seven Bereiters, five Assistant Riders (they are in the process of training their stallions to Grand Prix), and three Eleves (beginning students) at the SRS.



Bereiter Rostek leads the Quadrille on Neapolitano Allegra

For many people, the SRS is the Mecca of dressage, and they will take any opportunity to ride or audit with a Bereiter in a heartbeat.

Since the Bereiters only have vacation in January and July, and there are so few of them, opportunities in the U.S. for riding with them are rare. Rudi Rostek is the first Bereiter in recent history who has taught in Michigan while currently at the School. Not surprisingly, when the word got out that a Bereiter from the Spanish Riding School

would be coming to West Michigan, the clinic filled very quickly and auditor registrations began coming in.

ADA Clinic Attracts All Levels

Horse and rider pairs represented a wide variety of training and expertise, from

Training Level up to schooling Grand Prix. Regardless of the rider level, Rudi was consistently patient and encouraging. Riders were encouraged to go forward, forward, forward! But not racing or running... longer strides, not quicker.

Rudi also exhorted riders to keep working as they ride. Once the horse is moving well, it's common for riders to back off and expect the horse to simply carry on. He stressed the importance of riding every step and never losing focus, of continuing to work to make every step correct and beautiful.

Riders also had a tendency to let the horses fall apart in the corners, and again and again Rudi reminded riders not to lose the forward impulsion and bend.

*“Don't stop working!
Keep working!”*

One thing that the riders were particularly taken by was Rudi's encouraging manner of teaching. Improvement and effort were instantly praised, and he often told riders to pet their horses and encourage them, as well.

When riders ran into problems or made mistakes, the first words out of Rudi's mouth were “No problem, no problem!” Instead of clenching and getting frustrated, riders could relax and focus on fixing the problem as Rudi coached them through it.

Rudi rode several horses at the owners' requests, and it was truly a delight to watch him ride. One particularly funny moment occurred when an owner mentioned that her horse had difficulty doing tempis across the diagonal. Auditors and the owner laughed as Rudi, riding the horse, looked over his shoulder at her and began doing lovely tempis across the diagonal, with ease.

Rudi's English was very good and his explanations easy to understand. He was happy to answer questions

from the auditors and talk at length with riders until they understood a particular concept, and it was a treat to watch this gifted instructor bring out the best in the horses and riders.

It's no wonder the riders and auditors, rather than saying "good-bye" to Rudi, preferred instead to say "see you again": *Auf Wiedersehen!*

Jorie Sligh is an ADA Board member who enjoys working on the ADA Omnibus and website. She owns and adores a 22 yr old Lipizzan gelding, Conversano Blanca I, and has loved the Spanish Riding School since childhood. For information in riding in or hosting a clinic in the U.S. with a rider from the Spanish Riding School, please email her at jorie@alldressageassoc.org.



Claire Kendall of Muskegon in a "Kodak moment" following her lesson with Rudi. Says mom Lyn, also a clinic rider, "Rudi was incredibly intuitive about each rider/horse combo, with incredible timing of his feedback. He brought out the best in me and my horse and definitely in my daughter and her horse. I would ride with him regularly if I had the chance."

Below: Sean Nos ("Momo") thanks Rudi after a lesson; owner Julie Arkison on board.



Top Ten Things Heard at a Rudi Rostek Clinic

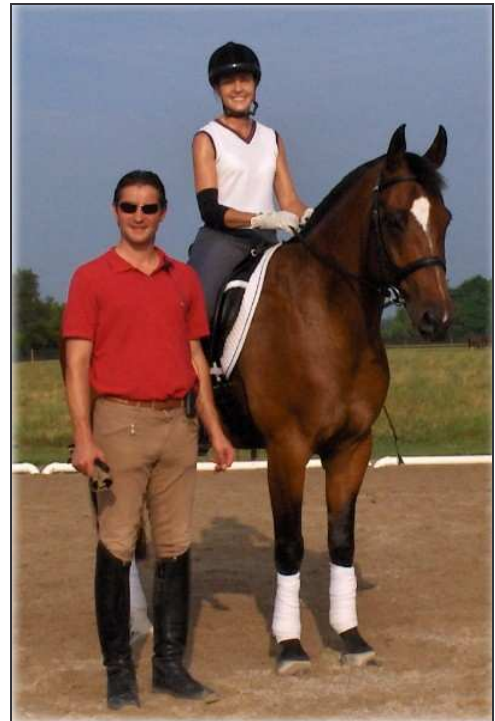
10. Pehr-fect! Soooo -puh!
9. No problem, no problem!
8. It's okay. You have time.
7. Don't lose him in the corners.
6. Play with your fingers
5. Don't stop working! Keep working!
4. More forward, more forward!
3. Sooooo good...
2. Hold your hands still.
1. Pet her! Pet her!



Rudi instructing Birgit Villeminey



Elizabeth Wels powering across the diagonal



*Rudi and Renee McKinley after a lesson
(see Renee's article linked on the
Membership page)*

"I just wanted to compliment you and everyone involved with organizing and putting on such a wonderful clinic. I was truly inspired. It was evident that a lot of hard work went into the planning and production. I especially appreciated the tent! I will be sure to attend other clinics that you guys present. Thanks so much!"

Mary Decker (Auditor, South Haven, MI)



Left: Rudi schools changes on Julie Arkison's mare, Magic Moment. Julie, of Saline, MI, rode numerous times herself during the clinic and says, "The fact that Rudi was knowledgeable and kind and also willing to point out fundamental things that a rider needs to do better, as well as praise what was correct, was what I liked most. He has a high standard that he held every horse and rider up to and did not compromise on that standard. I loved the clinic, and felt it was the most incredible experience I have had in my horse career thus far."

(See Julie's article, "Magic Moment", on www.alldressageassoc.org, linked from the Membership page.)



Below, auditors enjoy shade under the tent, where, mysteriously, a breeze blew almost the entire week!



Rhianna Pankhurst trailered her horse from PA for her lessons with Rudi. That's dedication!



Left: Rudi rides Rocky, owned by Mari Moon

Right: Rudi illustrates a point to auditors and Mari during the groundwork lesson with Mari's other horse, Pal.



Left: Leslie Sligh concentrates on keeping a steady connection with 22-year-old Blanca.

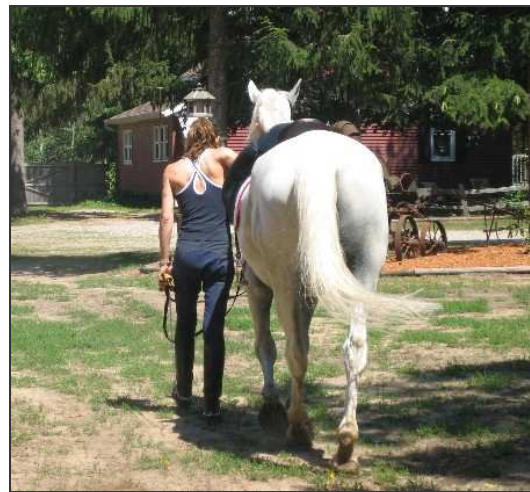
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Left: Rudi guides ADA Board member and “Rapport” editor Barbara Saunier to a more effective position on her mare, Felice.

Photo by John Bottema

Right: Hot and tired but happy following their last lesson with Rudi, Blanca and Jorie head back to the barn for quality time in the wash rack!



“Watching Rudi ride was a joy.”
- Diane Marcina (auditor), Battle Creek, MI



Left: Rudi clarifies a point to Birgit, who listens attentively while Saumur is busy checking out the auditor action.

After the clinic, Birgit wrote, “It was absolutely fantastic and I experienced a whole new level of riding. He is a gifted teacher and truly an inspiration!”

The All Dressage Association would like to thank all of the riders, auditors, Sponsors & special friends (please see listing www.alldressageassoc.org/sponsorlist.pdf), Patrons (pictures and Patron list at www.alldressageassoc.org/patronreception.pdf), volunteers, Jubilee Farm, and especially Rudi Rostek for helping to make this a memorable and successful event.