

A Lesson With Nikki Herbert

When I was given the opportunity to take my daughter's horse, Jake, to the Area Dressage competition at Sheepgate I decided it was the perfect opportunity to use my RRC training voucher and booked to have a lesson with Nikki Herbert. I wanted her to correct my position and riding and, using her judge's perspective, give me some tips on riding the tests.

Jake is usually very forward going and his main problem is that he gets tense and then becomes stiff and hollows. However, it turned out to be a warm, humid day and he was being a bit lazy so my first tip was not to 'nag' with my legs because the judge will immediately comment 'not in front of the leg'!

Nikki was quick to spot mine and Jake's main problems and offer helpful suggestions for correcting them and her advice about where I could pick up (or lose!) marks was very helpful. I came away with plenty to think about and practise and her suggestion to think 'travers' while preparing for and making a downwards transition from canter really helps to stop Jake from swinging his quarters.

The lesson certainly paid off. On the competition day Jake stayed relaxed but forward, I remembered (and tried to put into practise) most of what Nikki taught me, and we achieved our best results yet. It was very exciting to qualify for the Championships with the Novice team and as an individual for the Riding Test.

I have been having plenty of lessons with my regular trainer, Ann Ratcliffe, who has worked patiently with Jake for the past three years and definitely plan on having another lesson with Nikki for some more top tips for riding the tests.

