



Driving

Back to Sport

Megan Carruthers shows how to harness up



Angela Tuck

Sportmatch funding from Sport of England produced the Driving Back to Sport programme and on day two, EQ Life's design and production editor Angela Tuck takes the reins

DAY two of the 'Driving Back to Sport' programme got off to a flying start at Ashfields Carriage and Polo Club, in Great Canfield, Essex.

After our first taste, we were all very keen to return and were pleased to see not only our newly-made friends, but also some new 'learner drivers' too.

This time, we had the help of UKCC coaches Minta Winn, Wilf Bowman-Ripley, Maxine Ingham and Jean Lane with the addition of very experienced driving groom, Megan Carruthers.

Rein handling

Our tuition began with Maxine teaching us about the two main ways of holding the reins and whip – two-handed and Coachman style.

Two-handed is when holding the reins exactly as you would when riding, which is the preferred method for trials driving, giving more control.

Coachman style is holding both reins with one hand, while using the other hand to exaggerate shortening for sharper turns.

■ For more information on driving trials visit www.bhdata.co.uk or to find out more about the venue visit www.ashfieldscarriageandpoloclub.com

Harnessing-up

Megan – with a little help from her four-legged friend – explained to us the correct way to harness-up. She explained to us about each piece of harness and how it works whilst allowing people to have a go themselves.

We then put the carriage to the horse to complete the whole set-up.

Be honest with your marks and encouraging with your comments.

Maxine Ingham, speaking as a judge

Driving

Another chance to get back in the driving seat, and this time Wilf was allowing each of us to drive a dressage test.

He gave us a copy of the test and then asked us to walk the course. Luckily, it was a very simple test, as we then had to remember it all to drive. We went in pairs, and in turn, one was the driver and the other backstepper and drove around the course. It looked a little daunting at first, but you immediately wanted to do it all again once you'd driven round.

I also enjoyed my first experience as a backstepper. You can really feel the movement as the pony goes forward. I can see how this might get quite addictive to some in the marathon phase!

A Judge's eye view

In the afternoon, Jean and Maxine gave us a lesson on what the judges look for. We were given a copy of a driven dressage test score sheet, and together we watched a DVD of the test. Jean and Maxine discussed with the group what marks they would give each movement and why, pausing the DVD as we went. Towards the end of the session, we had to be the judges by ourselves and watch the test through again, deciding on the marks quickly and filling in the sheet under pressure. We wait to hear how we got on until next time!

Another enjoyable, action-packed day, with lots of help and advice from the coaches. Their knowledge is so valuable and we're loving every minute of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! EQ

Have you recently tried your hand at something new? Whether you've had a go at vaulting or side saddle, let us know. Get in touch at editor@eqlife.co.uk.