

Dear Sharni, Suzanne and the Dressage Tas SDA/JEP;

I began working toward my "C" level accreditation in conjunction with my D level work, taking the opportunity to see large groups of Advanced horses at the 2017 Nationals at Boneo Park where I sat-in with Trisha Sellers and at the Victorian Dressage Festival where I shadowed the 5.2 with Jane Ventura, the day after my D Exam.

This was before the current rule changes around waiting 12 months before commencing work towards upgrading – the wisdom behind which has become apparent to me!

In March 2018 for our State Championships at TEC, I sat in with Maria Schwennesen for the 5.2 and shadowed the 5.3 with Sue Bright.

In April 2018 I travelled to Boneo Park to judge the Medium 4.3 class and shadow the 5.2 with Veronica Steward.

In July 2018 I travelled to Boneo Park and judged a 1.2, 3.2 and 4.2 class and shadowed the 5.1 with Judy Peel and 5.2 with Helen Heagney and did an informal PSG sit-in with Jacqui Reed.

In July 2018 Kerrie once again patiently sat at her kitchen table and calmly offered tea and water as she supervised my theory examination.

1st and 2nd of September 2018 I travelled with Suzan McDermott, meeting Wendy Hunt at the airport on the way to the Victorian Dressage Club's Championship weekend where I was able to judge the 3.2, 2.1, 4.3 and 2.2 competitions.

At the October 2018 Nationals I sat in with Mary Seefried for the PSG in preparation for my upcoming practical examination, and took the opportunity to scribe for Mary in the Grand Prix Classes, Virginia Creed in the Inter B, Vic Barba (Phi) in the U25 GP, Sue Hobson (NZ) in the CDI W Grand Prix Freestyle and Jane Ventura in the CDN Grand Prix Freestyle.

In December 2018 I travelled with Suzan to the Victorian Dressage Festival. The Advanced Competition was on the Thursday, and my examiner was Susie Hoevenaars. I also took the opportunity to scribe for Mary Craine (NZ) in the Inter-A and Inter-II, Jane Ventura in the PSG (on a sweltering day in the Werribee indoor!), the PE with Liz Coe and again the Inter-1 with Mary Craine to finish off this show.

The outcome of my exam was that Susie felt I needed more training and experience, particularly with the canter pirouette work. While not what I had hoped for, Susie did give myself and Suzan some sage advice over coffee to see as many horses as possible and "make your training more difficult" so that when the exam comes it is a little easier.

Susie is of course 100% correct, and once I dusted myself off, I planned a trip to the 2019 Sydney CDI with Judy Atkinson and Linda Smink to see a quality field of Advanced horses in the "new" 5C as part of a sit-in with Susan Duddy. I was grateful for this, as the test had changed significantly for judges in terms of how movements are put together and marks allocated. I also took the opportunity to scribe for Maria Schwennesen and Adam Riess in the 5y.o. Horses and Ponies, Maria in the CDI Pony, PSG with Kerrie Swan-Bates, the 6y.o. YH/P with Kyli Bullock and Nell Marshman, Kerrie in the I1 CDN Freestyle, Medium Tour Freestyle with Jane Ventura and the GP CDN Freestyle with Gabriel Armando (Arg).

Stephen Clarke gave a wonderful workshop on the Sunday – a real highlight. I took many pages of notes with good intentions of writing them all up! However, life got in the way! Suffice to say that Stephen was able to help every rider who so generously gave up their time after a very busy weekend of competition, with good humour and practical exercises and some subtle alterations which made clear improvements in each horses' way of going.

On the 30th of August 2019 I was again able to travel to the VDC's "Championship" weekend, the organisers again generously found me a scribe and accommodated my request to shadow the advanced competitions with Jan Smith and Heather Buckland on the Saturday afternoon after judging the prelim and novice classes in the am. I was also able to judge a medium class of 17 horses on Sunday morning before a free afternoon and another opportunity to scribe for Maria Schwennesen for the few FEI tests ridden that afternoon. The benefit of seeing good lines of horses after a long winters break cannot be understated here.

Another opportunity provided by Suzanne Betts and the JEP, was for a final D/C Seminar facilitated by Bert Gibson at the beautiful Woodend Equestrian Centre, many thanks also goes to the demo riders who make these days possible for our judges.

If I wasn't ready now, I would never be!

Once again, the Boneo Park Organisers went over and above accommodating my request to attend the Spring CDI Event. Jane Ventura and the Victorian JEP were also incredibly supportive in offering to make the exam happen for me, with much assistance at this event and facilitating opportunities previously mentioned along the way.

I must admit that I was at the point of being little terrified of "just not getting it" and letting myself and all the people who have helped and encouraged me down!

Suzan McDermott was once again my travelling companion, and there were several Taswegians in the officials' draw – a real feather in Dressage Tasmania's cap!

As the draw was locked in, I was very excited to have the opportunity to write in the PSG for Sue Hobson, Judge the 3C, 2C (in which there were some real quality horses – an absolute delight to judge!) And the AOR 1B, Scribe for the Sue Hobson in the GP CDI-W – my first experience with the "Black Horse" e-scribe system which was a new skill! It was a challenge getting those Piaffe/Passage marks in quickly and accurately – comments were fortunately minimal, and as others had remarked to me, you actually get to see a little more as your eyeline is raised for the screen, a bonus for competitors must be the improved readability of printed text!

Once again, I felt humbled and privileged to be part of a super supportive team of judges and officials who work tirelessly improving their craft and developing their "eye".

Sunday was exam day. I was between my examiner Maria and Connie Bookless at the short end of the arena to fit us in. I once again had Pam Buxton-Barber the super scribe, and I felt the comments and remarks flowed more easily this time..... Members of the Vic JEP very kindly added and did my rankings for me – I was not counting any chickens until they had been hatched via the dreaded spreadsheet though!

With not too long to wait, a few days and I had a result – and what a huge relief it was!

I have many people to thank; the Dressage Tas SDA and JEP for providing local opportunities and supporting travel interstate where numbers require. Jane Ventura and the Vic JEP, Boneo Park and VDC OC's have made many opportunities available – I cannot thank them enough as we simply do not have the numbers in Tasmania. The Judges who have generously mentored me, organisers who have found these mentors and tweaked draws to accommodate my requests, people who have kindly scribed or added up for me, and of course my ever-patient family for their encouragement and support.

- Belinda Snooks
4th October 2019