



In October 2017 I took up a job at Abingdon RDA where I am part of a team that looks after the day to day care of the ponies. I was first introduced to RDA when I was nearly 3 years old. In 1999 at the John Radcliffe Hospital I was born with an upper limb deficiency meaning that I am missing part of my left hand and lower forearm and I am therefore classified as a Grade V rider in para-dressage. As I progressed with RDA I began entering competitions. I qualified at the Southern Region and won my first RDA National Championships aged 8 in 2007 on Star. Over the years I was lucky enough to compete many of the RDA ponies including Star, Speckles and Charlie B. Through RDA competitions I was then invited to participate in a British Dressage Para-Equestrian Talent Development competition in 2012 which I won aged 12 and following this was selected onto the British Equestrian Federation Para-Equestrian Entry Programme. I went on to compete at a British Dressage Para-Equestrian Rider Development competition which I won riding my current horse Buzz.

In 2015 I was selected onto the **British Equestrian Federation Excel Talent Programme** which seeks to identify, support and develop riders and horses that demonstrate talent and potential in the Paralympic discipline of Para-dressage. I have since represented England Central Region competing in my first Para Home International where I won the Grade V overall individual title. In future years my aims are to be selected onto World Class Podium Potential and to compete internationally for Great Britain. Having completed my first dressage test aged 7, and continuing to compete regularly in able bodied and para competitions since, I have put together some top tips for increasing your scores in dressage. I am always learning and by no means an expert but I hope that some of you may find them helpful.

My top tips for increasing your scores in dressage:

Memorise your test – even if you are having your test called, knowing it well is crucial to riding a good test. This will allow you to focus your attention on riding your horse. Personally, to help with memorising tests I like to visualise my test in my head with my eyes shut or read the test aloud to my mum. Other options are to set up a mini arena at home in your living room and walk your test on foot or sketch it out on a whiteboard.

Centre lines – these open and finish each dressage test you ride and are therefore very important as they are the first and last impression the judge has of you. The two centre line movements are both worth 10 marks and should therefore not be overlooked as they are easy marks to earn but also easy marks to lose. Enter on your preferred rein, look up, smile at the judge and remember to keep straight after the halt all the way to C.

Don't cut the corners – corners are a valuable opportunity to give you a few extra seconds to prepare and set up for the next movement. It is easy to fly through the corners when you are focusing on the next movement so riding your corners must become a habit. Instead, take advantage of the corner perhaps to do a small half halt so you come out of the corner as prepared as you can be for the next movement.

Accuracy – this is so important because it is almost totally in your control. Simple things like riding your transitions on the marker and making your circles round and the right size can help to improve scores. Be sure to look up, not down at your horse, this will help you be more accurate and prepare for your transitions whilst also helping with your riding position.

Enjoy it – remember that things don't always go to plan with horses! If one movement doesn't go as well as you had hoped, don't worry, it is only one movement out of the test and it won't have a huge impact on your overall score. Ride each movement the best you can regardless of the last one. Judges love to see a happy partnership so remember to enjoy yourself!

Molly Bowen-Morris

Dressage Anywhere – is an online platform for competing in dressage? It has a special RDA section. You register for free, and each month they run a series of classes to enter. You video yourself riding the test (in a 20x40 school) and upload it to the site to be judged online. <https://www.dressageanywhere.com/>

This could be good for our riders who are unable to travel to regionals or feel more comfortable riding within the safety of our group setting.

New Building – as you will have noticed we have a new building going up which will allow our riders to practise in a full size dressage arena. The footings have gone down now so that we don't have to re-apply for planning permission. It is costing more than we anticipated because we have been told that we have to pay VAT. It will have to be done in stages as we can afford it, so if anyone has any contacts who would like to sponsor it, please let Ann know.

Horses – we are looking for a horse approximately 15:2 hh. for our adults and larger riders. It would be great if it is suitable for dressage as well as general classes, sensible, forward going but easy on the brakes. Please let us know ASAP if you hear of anything that is suitable. The good ones are snapped up quickly!