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NEWS OF NOTE

RUTLEDGE FARM SESSION: BOYD MARTIN IS SOLID GOLD

LAUREN R. GIANNINI

Rutledge Farm Sessions raised the bar of its already impressive roster of elite equestrian clinicians on August 10 when Aleco Bravo-Greenberg introduced Boyd Martin, miked up and ready to share his cross-country expertise in the outdoor arena. Boyd, a two-time Olympian, arrived at Rutledge Farm hot off the podium after anchoring the U.S. Eventing Team's significant victory with his own individual gold medal performance aboard Tsetserleg at the recent Pan American Games in Lima, Peru.

Boyd is extremely personable, articulate, and charming with that Australian accent, essentially one of the nicest people. He's a great rider and awesome competitor; cross-country he gets the job done and it's been exciting to watch him rise to the top since making his American debut with Yin Yang Yo in 2006 at then Rolex Kentucky 4-star. Boyd loves horses and watching him teach is a pleasure. Even with the fifth and final group of the day, his enthusiasm was obvious.

"I did enjoy myself, and I'm still on a bit of a high and a bit of a buzz after the Pan Am Games," Boyd said. "Teaching clinics is always kind of fun and it was a brilliant day of training and hopefully a bit of an inside look at how I go about training my horses at home. Rutledge Farm is a world-class facility and they organize a well run professional clinic. I can't thank everyone enough for inviting me."

Boyd delivered a solid gold learning experience to riders from Advanced to Baby Novice based on methods he uses at home to get his horses "thinking cross-country" even in the ring. The goal of Boyd's progressive exercises on the flat and over show jumps is to be prepared, especially mentally, for what comes up fast out there. By simulating "questions" found on cross-country courses, Boyd's method teaches horses to think quickly, to expect the unexpected, and be prepared to size up a fence the moment they see it. When you consider that event horses never see the actual jumps until they're on course and galloping at them, Boyd's methods make sense. The riders also learn the importance of thinking fast and reacting appropriately out there.

"To be honest, not everyone has access to cross-country schooling and sometimes the ground will not allow us to go out and do a big school over cross-country fences in a field," Boyd said. "We need to be training horses to think about being cross-country horses and what we did today came from a bunch of lessons

I've learned over the years: to train the horse to expect the unexpected by coming up with exercises to jump and quickly jump again – without too much preparation and with a bit of a surprise. I try to teach a style of riding that encourages confidence and gets the job done."

Boyd emphasized that appearances don't count as much on the cross-country as getting the job done, which ideally is finish double clear: no jumping penalties and no time faults. Emphasizing basics, balance, and building confidence in horse and rider, Boyd gave each participant a lot to think about. Cross-country is the heart of the discipline and it's serious "craic" whether you compete seriously or simply to enjoy a stronger partnership with your horse or pony.

"I did this clinic for three reasons," said Rob Banner after his session with Boyd. "One, I love to ride. I live to ride. I'm never going to stop riding until I'm old and gray. Two, I did it for my horse, Secret Beau, because he's a nice talented 10-year-old Thoroughbred, given to me in utero by the breeder and I've had him all his life. We broke and trained him. He hunts, he show jumps. We do anything I can get him



to do. Three, because of Rutledge Farm and what they are doing – it's cool to have Olympians and medalists teaching us. You'd never find it any other place, only in Middleburg, VA, and it's all thanks to Rutledge Farm."

In case you're thinking ... oh, wow, but... no, I'm not good enough, my horse or pony is too green, blah blah blah – just stop. Rutledge Farm Sessions are for every level of rider of any age in every discipline who aspires to be their very best. Clinics are scheduled every month and extreme-

ly affordable.

"I'll do as many of the Rutledge Farm clinics as I can," said Rob, who rode with Phillip Dutton (3-Day) and Leslie Burr-Howard (showjumping). "Rutledge Farm is running a "nursery" of some note and it's very appropriate to have it here in Middleburg. We have great trainers, and the great get greater. To bring in leaders in equestrian sport to teach us is a treat and we shouldn't let that opportunity pass us by. I have a little homework – that's what you bring away from clinics. I know what to work on when I

get home – surprises, getting the horse to do something he's never seen before and be willing to do it for me. That's what he would find in competition, what he would have to face and excel doing it. I came away with that and I look forward to the next time to learn more."

Upcoming Rutledge Farm Sessions include Debbie McDonald – dressage, Will Simpson – jumper/hunter, Ali Brock – dressage, Phillip Dutton – eventing, and Stacia Madden – equitation.

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www.rutledgefarm.com

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