

The second half of Tuesday was driving to New Jersey. I was able to pack up most of my stuff in my rental car and only had to load my three tack trunks on the trailer along with Ron while I followed along. Most of our trip was uneventful, except for the major blowout on the trailer tire early on. It was one of the loudest I have heard and the tire was completely shredded. Nothing two horsey girls can't handle! Lisa and I had that tire changed in a hurry and were back on the road without much time lost. After we crossed the first state line and I paid an \$8 toll and then the second with a \$4 toll, I was starting to get worried that I might not have enough cash to make it there! When I entered the New Jersey Turnpike and picked up my toll ticket, with only about \$3 cash left, I decided I better pull off, grab a Starbucks and some cash. Turned out to be a good thing, because I had an airport trek to do later that evening to pick up Morgan and Taylor and the tolls would do more damage to my pocketbook.

We arrived at the stables in the dark, so I couldn't really get my bearings, but Ron was situated in a nice end stall, with our tack stall right across. There are several open stalls around us, so it is nice to have some extra privacy. Very quiet for the horses and hand grazing right out in front of the stalls.

It was a very short night as after the airport run, Morgan and Taylor were still on CA time and hungry for dinner. Some classy microwave meals from the hotel gift shop filled the tummies, but the 1:00 am bedtime made for a very early 6:00 wake up call. It was great to have an extra pair of hands on though to get set up and with only one horse and a limited amount of equipment, it went very quickly. Bec would have been proud!

I tacked up for dressage, planning to try out my new bits. It was a bit of a rough ride, as we were in a new place, had jumped and galloped the day before and the new curb chain was not wrapped like my old one. Ron was extremely backed off the contact and I struggled to get him out in front of my leg. I finally made some progress at the end, but I was really wishing we had another day to get ready for dressage! Bathing and braiding went smoothly and before I knew it, it was time to jog. Morgan served the groom role exceptionally well, polishing up until the last minute and up and down the lane we went to be accepted. Even though I didn't anticipate any problems, it is always good to get that part out of the way. We had time to take our first tour of the course after the jog and boy, did we get confused. The beginning part is very twisty and turny and there is a long pull up hill to the 8 minute mark, followed by a very steep hill. We were all feeling pretty exhausted by the walk and feeling like the horses had a lot to deliver on Saturday.





My ride time for Thursday was late in the day, so I had some time to work through my connection issues. With my curb chain now wrapped in vet wrap and adjusted a bit looser, Ron was much happier and I was able to get closer to the work that I had been getting the previous week. I wanted to be careful not to overdue it in the pre-ride, but I finished up wishing I had 6 more months to work on it! But I had to go with what I had, knowing that he is so much better than he was 6 months ago and the improvement will continue through the year. While Morgan finished up last minute tack cleaning and metal polishing, I got out on the cross country to walk the course again and get the minute markers. The second time around, the twisty turny course was starting to make sense as I got a feeling for the lay of the land. The timing was just about right for my final preparations to get ready

for our test and after a pretty good warm up, headed in for our test. Ron stayed calm and obedient throughout and put in one of his best tests ever and about as good as a test as he can do at this point in his dressage career. He scored a 55.2 which put him in the middle of the pack against a very competitive field.

