

Today I get to try out my new Volant boots! Courtesy of Ariat, the new style of Volant has a little something special on the tops. I'm looking forward to the familiar tennis-shoe like comfort of the Volant's paired with the hint of extra styling. Hopefully, like all of my other Ariat boots that I have broken in, the first ride should do the trick.



As I leave the barn to head down to my dressage lesson with David, this is the view that I am greeted by. Another beautiful day in Virginia, and where the barn at High Acre sits, as you hack down to the ring, you get this gorgeous panoramic view of the valley. The dressage has been steadily improving, especially since our last couple of sessions with Sandy Phillips this spring. Ron is finally beginning to develop a topline and this added muscling is enabling him to work more correctly for longer periods of time, therefore improving his muscling. A positive circle that has us moving in the right direction. I also added the double bridle, which I was initially reluctant to do. I didn't feel that Ron was nearly strong enough or ready for collection to warrant the double bridle, but I also couldn't keep his head down. Funny how those dressage judges aren't amused when your horses head is in the air. Ron seemed to get the picture and realize that's not really how he is supposed to go and the added level of cooperation has allowed us to break through some barriers. His score of 64% at Galway was reward for this hard work and I'm hoping we can get that again at Jersey, or even pull out a few more points.

Next stop, the Virginia Gold Cup races. The first Saturday of May is the big Derby Day, but Virginia has its equivalent in the Gold Cup races. My biggest concern was that I didn't pack appropriate clothes. I brought jeans and jog clothes, but nothing in between. I was pretty sure I would be the only one at the races in jeans and I was spot on. There was quite a crowd on hand to watch the races, with full, lavish, tail gating spreads. Dozens of full size busses had shipped Washington city folk in for the event and everyone was dressed to the nines. Many were





sporting derby style hats and the people watching was just as fascinating as the races. David was there to meet with board members of the Great Meadow site which recently added land to build a new Nation's Cup course. I have competed once before at the Great Meadow site, during the final outing for the 2002 World Equestrian Games, and this summer the site will host the final trial for WEG bound horses and riders. The venue is a great fit for an event location and I was privy to a tour of the location for the new ring and site tour for the course. The area already boasts many eventers and eventing fans, as well as the huge crowds that came out to support this event, so I'm sure it will be a success.

We raced home from the Gold Cup just in time to catch the Derby horses being loaded in to the gate and to cheer California Chrome home to victory. A great day was capped off with a lovely meal prepared by Karen's mom, using delicious grass fed Stonehall beef.