

## **A Few Gems & Takeaways From The William Fox-Pitt Clinic**

When I heard William Fox-Pitt was coming to our area I knew I had to carve out some time to attend and watch. In early March, he came to Melissa Stubenberg's beautiful Kealani Farm in West Grove, PA to teach for three days. Riders and auditors were very fortunate to soak in all his knowledge.

Not knowing many of these riders, William started the first day's session with asking for an introduction from each rider and some history of their horse. He made sure each rider knew they could raise a concern if an exercise or fence height was out of their comfort zone. I believe that is a great sign of a thoughtful and insightful clinician. I was only able to watch the first day but here are some gems William shared.

- Warm up to jump with clear intent. Don't make the horse guess what you are asking.
- Have a reaction on how your horse is feeling.
- Go forward with transitions. Be straight and then add some bend.
- Concentrate on rhythm.
- Use a light seat in warm-up. Get up and out of the saddle. Even jump in a light seat to relax the horse.
- Have a connection with your rein.
- Keep away from the neck.
- A bent leg is a strong leg.
- A young horse needs to learn to use their legs, so they become a safe horse.
- Don't let your position be compromised just because you are trotting over a pole.
- Sometimes we need to deal with the uncomfortable.
- Remember to breathe out.

Tuesday's exercises built upon each other. William started with raised trot and canter poles on a half-circle where the riders were working on maintaining balance and establishing rhythm. He continued to a cross rail where riders had to trot, walk, and then trot again just before the jump. This exercise ensured the horse was truly in front of the rider's leg and listening.



*Emily Dagnault-Salvaggio riding her El Cuador. Photo Credit 2024 JAS Photography*

William's next effort had two fences on a slight curve. Riders needed to jump the line in a normal 5 stride, then a going 4 stride and finally on a waiting 6 stride. This tested adjustability. He finished with putting a course together. It was genuinely inspiring to see how most of the horses, throughout the day, gained confidence and therefore jumped better and better.



*Suzanne Ringer riding her Nora. Photo Credit HoofWoof images.*

William's teaching style was not only excellent, but he also treated us to some funny British humor when he said the following:

- He called the triple a treble.
- "That was a bit of a splat."
- "Get on with it."
- "He is being such a plank."

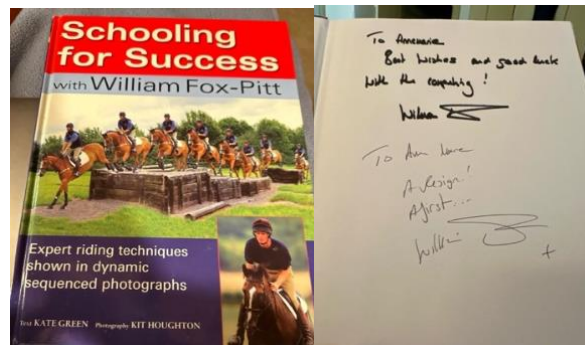
At the end of the day, I helped set the course for Wednesday's lessons which included the indoor filled with many narrows; a test of accuracy.

We finished Tuesday with an evening cocktail party at the Acadian Wine Company in West Grove where we celebrated and honored the local volunteers. As William entered the winery, he immediately took the time to thank all the volunteers for their dedication to the sport. He kindly took many moments to pose with people as they took pictures or asked for autographs. It was a lovely evening with delicious food, fine wine, and lively discussions amongst eventing enthusiasts.



*James Newman, Melissa Stubenberg, William Fox-Pitt, Brian Roberts and Tiffany Wandy  
Photo Credit HoofWoof images.*

Huge thanks to William, Tiffany Wandy, Melissa Stubenberg, the Kealani farm team, everyone who helped put on this clinic and the riders. It was a highlight of my week and a great jump start to the season. I am already looking forward to his next clinic.



**This is one of my favorite William Fox-Pitt books!** Who gets an autograph at Rolex in 2004 and then twenty years later in 2024? Me! As William wrote... "a first." (ha, ha)

*Annemarie Cochrane lives in Elverson, Pennsylvania. She is an equestrian sales representative in the Mid-Atlantic and a USEF eventing judge. [www.tackculture.com](http://www.tackculture.com)*