

Ribbons are only part of the fun at high school/middle school championship.

by Alex Bischoff

The minute you step through the doors, you find the bright lights streaming down onto the immense indoor arena. Directly in front of you are large collages of pictures of IEA riders and shows since the beginning of IEA in 2002. If you turn to your right, you see the draw table stacked with color-changing cups, one of which holds the name of your partner. If you turn to your left you find a gift shop, food and vendors. The further you walk down, the more sponsors, colleges and vendors you find.



The Finals were held April 21-23 at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington, VA.

The Interscholastic Equestrian Association first began in 2002. That year, there were 257 riders across the country. You needed to compete in one show and get at least one point to go to Nationals. This year, in the 2016-2017 season, there were over 12,500 riders in the IEA, and it is still growing. To qualify for National this season, you had to make it through regular season shows, regional finals, and zone finals. Making it to Nationals is a giant success. There are 21-22 people in every class, so not everyone can win, but there is so much more to experience than just your class.

On Friday night, there was a dinner party, complete with DJ and a dance floor to have fun with your own team, riders you know from Zone 10, and new friends. A favorite event for my team,

and riders, coaches and spectators from across the country is watching the Varsity Open Championship class on Saturday afternoon. The class is made up of the top 10 riders, based on ribbons in the Open over fences Individual Final and the Open Flat Individual Final. The 10 riders return for an over-fences and flat phase to compete for the position of Leading Hunt Seat IEA rider for the year. This year Cecily Hayes from North Peak Equestrian placed fifth.

Another favorite activity is the Parade of Teams. During the Parade of Teams, every team is introduced as they walk into the arena and spread out around the rail. Some teams get creative and dress up, like Red Barn and Woodside did this year in their team onesies. The founders and board members of IEA share stories and announce the location of next year's Nationals. But, the best part is when they play a game where IEA Founder Roxanne Lawrence asks a question, and if the answer is yes, you run into the middle and introduce yourself to someone new that also ended up in the middle. My favorite question was "Who has fallen off in the past year?"

Sportsmanship and horsemanship are just as prominent at National Finals as anywhere else in IEA. Each team that attends Nationals selects one rider to wear a white armband throughout the weekend, which qualifies them for the Sportsmanship award. All weekend, riders with and without the armband can be found helping to run papers for the office staff, moving jumps, and holding horses for a barn from across the country that they hadn't heard of before that day. Midmorning on Saturday, there is a written horsemanship test of 25 questions. The top four scores continue to do a hands-on practical test on Sunday morning.

Going to IEA National Finals is an amazing experience all in all. Besides the thrill of competing in a national competition, you get to bond with your team and your zone, and meet new people. After helping out, waiting for your draw, and sitting next to a team from Texas, my team and I found ourselves making new friends from all over the country and hearing stories from their IEA experiences. One rider I talked to from New York was amazed to hear we have the majority of our regular season IEA shows at barns without a covered or indoor arena. You don't have to win to have good time, as long as you have fun and make the most of your experience.

Author Alex Bischoff is a member of Elvenstar's IEA team.





Zone 10 IEA Final Results

Varsity Open Championship

- 5th: Cecily Hayes, North Peak Equestrian -

Varsity Intermediate on the Flat -- Individual Final

- 7th: Keilty Archibald, Woodside Equestrian Team

Future Intermediate on the Flat -- Individual Final

- 2nd: Emma Symon, Woodside Equestrian Team
- 6th: Skylar Wireman, Chestnut Hills

JV Novice on the Flat -- Individual Final

- 8th: Samantha Zagha Woodside Equestrian Team

Future Beginner on the Flat --Individual Final

- 4th: Alexis Giblin MVCS Equestrian

JV Beginner on the Flat --Team Final

- 1st: Naomi Jecker--Eshel, Woodside Equestrian Team

JV Novice on the Flat --Team Final

- 3rd: Sofia Bliss--Carrascosa, Red Barn

Future Novice on the Flat --Team Final

- 6th: Alexandra Lipacis, Sonoma Valley Stables-

Varsity Intermediate on the Flat --Team Final

- 6th: Keilty Archibald, Woodside Equestrian Team

Future Intermediate on the Flat --Team Final

- 5th: Nicole McMillion, Elvenstar

Varsity Open of the Flat -- Team Final

June 2017 - IEA National Finals

Written by Alex Bischoff

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- Nicole Bakar, Red Barn