

A great draw at an IEA show and what to do when you don't get one...

Interscholastic Equestrian Association shows challenge riders' abilities with the random horse draw. After watching warm-ups, every rider will have some favorites and some not-so-favorites. Many riders use warm-up time to write some information about what techniques the warm-up riders are using on specific horses and information about each horse that could later prove beneficial.

This variability and challenge of each specific horse makes picking from the bowl of horse names all the more exciting. There are three ways the draw could go: selecting the horse that appears most desirable (normally entails nice movement, obedient to aids and general fluidity), selecting an average mount (normally a typical school horse), or selecting a challenging horse (normally a horse with a quirk of some sort or an attitude).

Every rider will experience all three draws in their IEA career, and most riders are grateful for having each experience.

In the first instance, the initial reaction is generally one of joy, but some riders do experience nerves around selecting the perceived "best draw" because they fear more judgment from making a mistake on what may be viewed as the easiest horse. If this happens, it is important to remember that most riders' focus in IEA is on self-improvement, so relax and enjoy the ride on an amazing horse.

In the second instance, do not fear having selected a less fancy horse. The top placing rounds are always clean with a smooth track, even tempo and good distances. Generally school horses know this job very well when clearly instructed by the rider. IEA is based in Hunt Seat Equitation with an emphasis on rider's position and how the rider uses their skills to ride an unknown horse, so the fanciest horse does not necessarily win.

In the third instance, the fact that the judge should (and generally does) take into account the difficulty of the horse is comforting. There are riders in IEA that even like receiving harder draws because it makes a clean round that much more impressive.

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In all three cases, every horse provides an individual challenge to the rider, and true horsemanship requires riders to be a life-long student.

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