

Thompson School Seniors Put on Popular Spring Horse Show

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ALL THE HARD WORK PUT IN BY HORSE, RIDER, AND STUDENTS IN AN APPLIED ANIMAL SCIENCE CLASS PAYS OFF WHEN SHOW DAY ROLLS AROUND.

Before the sun is up, a pair of ponytailed UNH students are out at Spinney Lane on the far edge of campus, double-checking the dressage rings their classmates set up two days earlier.

As 8 a.m. rolls around, more students head down Mast Road, past the Livestock Activities Center, to an outdoor ring of brightly colored jumps.

At the UNH Thompson School of Applied Science spring combined tests, all eyes are on the horse and rider teams who have spent months getting ready to compete. But there's another team that's also put in months of preparation—a team that, if it's done its job, is all but invisible to the competitors who ride their horses through a day of dressage and stadium jumping. That team is the students in the Thompson School's Applied Animal Science 553, Equine Competition Management (AAS 533), who plan, administer, and execute the horse show.

For many of the riders who compete, the April show is official kickoff to a competition season that will run through early autumn. For the students of AAS 553, the show is an invaluable hands-on experience that translates into something much greater than a grade. Says Thompson School professor Laurie Chapman-Bosco, who has been teaching the course since 1990, "after graduation, these students go on to get jobs because they know every aspect of how to run a horse show."



TSAS SENIORS JACKIE TRAPP '12 (LEFT) AND REMY DAIGLER '12 (RIGHT) CONFER WITH STADIUM JUMPING COURSE DESIGNER MARTHA TAYLOR-VARNEY IN BETWEEN JUMPING CLASSES.

For Chapman-Bosco and her students, work gets under way as soon as spring semester convenes. The class, typically comprising 8-12 Thompson School seniors, is divided into four groups with primary responsibility for pre-show publicity, management of entries, the dressage phase of the show, and the jumping phase of the show. In February and March, students advertise the show, send out entry forms to previous competitors, log and confirm the accuracy of entries as they come in, and solicit the professional judges who will score the dressage and jumping events.

As the show date approaches, logistics take center stage. Backed by a group of first year Thompson School and COLSA student volunteers, the AAS students assign each horse and rider pair to a showing time, create signs for parking and bathrooms and competitor results, and set up the separate arenas for dressage and jumping. The day of the show itself they are out at the University's equine facilities as early as 6 a.m., ready for the first wave of horse trailers to roll in.

Throughout the process, Chapman-Bosco places a premium on teamwork, noting that every student's grade is dependent on the success of the show.

"Students are dealing with the public in the name of the University, and that's something that can't be taken lightly," she says.

By all accounts, it isn't. This year's show, held April 15, attracted some 60 riders and went off smoothly in spite of unseasonable 80-degree temperatures. Students directed riders to dressage rings and transcribed judges' comments, called competitors into the jumping arena and handed out ribbons. They also picked up a few pointers for themselves. "I learned a ton about show jumping," says Jackie Trapp '12, who rides western style and doesn't jump. "There's a lot of thought that goes into how far apart the jumps are spaced, what order you have the riders take them in, and stuff like that."

Jenn McNeal '12, who worked in the dressage group, has never competed in a horse show. "I've always been more into the companion/care side of horses," she says. Though she thoroughly enjoyed the show experience, she says she still prefers her equines from the ground. "Things in our group went pretty smoothly, so I got to really pay attention to what the riders and the judges do."

The combined tests are the first of two popular shows UNH equine students put on in the spring. On May 5-6, it's COLSA students' turn to take the lead, as they put on a two-day event that sees riders competing in cross country—jumping logs, barrels, and other obstacles out in an open field—in addition to the dressage and stadium jumping tests.

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