



UNH Intercollegiate Dressage Association Team Wins Northeast Region For First Time

Competes In Nationals April 27 - 29

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DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire's Intercollegiate Dressage Association (IDA) team has won the northeast regional championships for the first time. The team's four riders will compete in the national championships this weekend, April 27 – 29, at Centenary College in Hackettstown, N.J.

Four student riders will represent UNH at the national championships: Caroline McCarthy, a sophomore business major from Geneva, N.Y.; Jessica Donovan, a junior equine science major from Exeter; Kimberly Guyer, a sophomore pre-vet major from Northborough, Mass.; and Chelsey Pletts, a sophomore English major from New Haven, Vt. Students compete individually at their levels and as a team.

Dressage is sport that can be likened to ballet for horse and rider; the famous Lippizan stallions of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna are an example of dressage at its highest level. Riders strive to systematically develop and improve the horse's strength, flexibility, balance, gaits and movement to create a harmonious partnership between horse and rider, with invisible communication.

Intercollegiate dressage competition has the added challenge that the rider must perform her test on an unfamiliar horse. Each college takes a turn hosting a show and provides all the horses for the riders of every team. In a true test of skill, tact and sensitivity, riders draw horses at random and have just 10 minutes to get to know the horse and try to establish a harmonious relationship with the animal.

"Without a doubt, this is the strongest group of riders I have coached," said Sarah Hamilton, director of the UNH Equine Program and coach of the IDA team. "In addition to their ample skills as riders, they are motivated, extremely hard-working, and highly coachable. They set the goal of qualifying for nationals, and they fought hard to achieve it and win the region in very tight competition."

Hamilton notes that competitors ride several hours each week in addition to practice time, and that becoming an effective dressage rider can take years. The intercollegiate dressage season begins in September, breaks from December through February, then resumes in March.

The UNH Equine Program offers a bachelor's in animal science that allows students to concentrate in one of the following three tracks: equine industry and management, therapeutic riding, or equine science. Classes include stable management, horse care, teaching, training, horsemanship, conformation, equine diseases, equine sports medicine, reproduction, nutrition and horse trials management. The Equine Program also has an active riding program which concentrates in dressage and eventing and two equestrian teams, the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association Team (hunt seat) and the Intercollegiate Dressage Association Team (dressage). Both teams had their best seasons ever this year. UNH hosts two nationally recognized horse trials and two nationally recognized dressage shows each

year, in addition to several schooling shows. UNH's therapeutic riding program is recognized as a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association Premier Operating Center. UNH has an active Horsemen's Club, as well as study abroad programs that include a week-long trip to Portugal for the concentrated study of classical dressage.

For more information on the UNH IDA team, go to <http://www.unh.edu/horsemensclub/IDA.html>. For information on the Equine Program, go to www.equine.unh.edu.