The cover of the Fall 2012 issue of "Take the REINS" magazine, featuring an image of a saddle and the text "INSIDE... 2012 Western National Finals Results 2012 Holy Innocents’ Horsemanship Award." The publication is the Official Publication of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association.
INSIDE . . .
2012 Western National Finals Results

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Life-long friendships are the greatest benefit of participating in equestrian sports. Our equine microcosm offers ongoing opportunities to meet like-minded comrades with a love of horses and horse sports. We all share a common tie that binds and follow paths that cross in multiple ways. The 2012 IEA National Finals events offered two prime examples of these enjoyable friendships for me-featuring old friends and new ones.

Hosting the Hunt Seat Finals in Syracuse, New York, was like "old home week" for me! I spent about 10 years of my early, adult life in upstate New York and worked numerous events at the fairgrounds with morning donuts, 18-hour show days, and every kind of breed and discipline imaginable! Naomi Blumenthal was my boss and mentor, and though I jokingly vow to pay her back for the knowledge and experience I gained under her watch, I could not possibly pay her back for the knowledge and experience I gained under her watch. As a prior judge and steward of the IEA finals, she enthusiastically laid out the red carpet for the IEA to share her favorite venue at the fairgrounds. While I was there, I enjoyed catching up with trainers from my New York past including Terese Bouchard, Denise van Patten, and Michael & Debbie McGowan who now coach IEA teams and generously joined other IEA enthusiasts to provide horses for the weekend. Bill Yeager was just finishing college the last time I worked with him, and he did an outstanding job on our courses, footing and show logistics. (Billy also manages the IHSA Finals.) And, one of my favorite old friends was there to swing the in-gate—Danny McNeill! (Anyone that has ever shown at Syracuse knows Danny; he has been swinging that gate for as long as I can remember, probably 30 years or more, and he knows all the names and faces that have frequented those fairgrounds throughout his tenure.) It was a great, personal honor to bring the IEA Nationals to a facility full of old friends, familiarity and personal history. It was really a special place to host our 10 Year Anniversary Hunt Seat Finals!

In June we turned to Oklahoma City, the site of the Western Finals and home of our new and dear friends in the NRHA! Two years ago when we contracted with NRHA to host the IEA Western Finals, we all exchanged business cards and started on our journey through the details. Fast forward to the 2012 IEA Western Finals, an outstanding event, and a true testament to the commitment and friendship that we have received from the NRHA where we have met some of our best "new" friends. My No. 1 connection has been Shianne Megel (NRHA Youth Manager). When we swapped cell numbers and started texting each other during the 2011 Finals, I knew we were committed to mutual success, and she has been there to answer every one of my questions, e-mails, phone calls and texts throughout the year! In turn, Shianne has introduced us to her core of friends and co-workers at the NRHA including Christa Morris who immediately helped us with IEA Press and Marketing; Todd Barden who helped with additional marketing and sponsorship coordination, (even banner-hanging); and Melanie Rinehart who worked tirelessly and graciously to fit our IEA classes into the busy schedule and logistics of the Derby! The friendship and hospitality we received from Beth Himes (NRHA Board President), Dan Wall (NRHA Executive Director), and the entire staff of the NRHA has been the most enjoyable part of our partnership.

The NRHA continues to extend a friendly hand to our organization as it now assumes the publication of our quarterly magazine, Take the Reins! While the magazine was generously conceived and published by IEA parents Wilson and Leah Cole for the last two years, they were unable to continue its publication. The IEA spent several months seeking a new publisher, and the NRHA offered to help. Carol Trimmer (NRHA Senior Director of Publications) is taking on the role of publisher for our IEA magazine in addition to her duties with the NRHA Reiner. We look forward to partnering with the NRHA of Oklahoma State University to continue this publication as a benefit to our members.

As fall approaches, the IEA begins its 11th season with support from old friends and new ones. I welcome all of our members to a new issue of “Take the Reins,” a new season of IEA competitions, and to a year full of new opportunities to make life-long, dedicated friends who appreciate and support your love for horses and equine athletics.

Sincerely,

Roxane Lawrence
Winning Big at the Western

by Karen Shedlauskas

The 2012 Interscholastic Equestrian Association Western National Finals had more than 500 riders qualified and 147 of those leading riders traveled to the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds in Oklahoma City during June 28–30, 2012, to compete for the IEA Western National Championships.

The finals were held during the NRHA Derby and sponsored by the NRHA and NRHyA, which are IEA affiliates. Team and individual riders competed in multiple events during the 2011–2012 show season in regional and zone finals to qualify for the IEA Western National Finals competition. The finalists represented 33 teams from seven zones across the United States.

“This was the first time the IEA and the NRHA teamed together to hold our finals,” said Roxane Lawrence, IEA Co-founder and Executive Director. “It was fun being part of the renowned NRHA Derby event. Our members, parents and coaches are overwhelmingly pleased with the support of the NRHA and NRHyA. We are especially grateful to the owners, agents and trainers that supplied the high-quality horses.”

The NRHA was equally pleased with the excitement that the National Finals brought to Derby week.

“We were honored to host the IEA Western National Finals,” said Dan Wall, NRHA Executive Director. “The energy that IEA members and supporters brought to the event was absolutely amazing. We enjoyed watching them compete and learning more about the sport of reining. They are talented competitors that are certain to be the next generation of equestrian superstars, and we are thrilled to be involved with them from the beginning.”

The IEA was formed in 2002 and celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2012. There are team and individual competitions that include multiple levels of horsemanship and reining classes. The team competition is divided into upper school and middle school, which primarily consists of students age 11–19.

IEA Competition Format

The unique aspect of these competitions, both at the local and national level, is that none of the riders will supply their own horses or tack. Instead, the horses, saddles and other tack are
provided to the students at the show. The host team arranges for the horses and equipment. Some of the equipment may be borrowed from various training barns and facilities. Though the rider and horse have a short opportunity at orientation in the over fences classes, essentially, the horse is new to the rider, and the scores are based upon horsemanship and equitation, not the horse. The competitions involve six classes jumping over fences no greater than three feet and numerous flat equitation classes.

Western riders show in horsemanship and Reining, and saddle seat riders show in both rail and individual workout classes. All disciplines offer a variety of ability levels from beginner through advanced.

### 2012 IEA Western National Finals Awards

**Champion Western Rider**  
Carly Bedinghaus, Dare Equestrian Team  
Hilliard, Ohio

High school senior Carly Bedinghaus was named the IEA Champion Western Rider of the Year. She accumulated the most points in the Individual Varsity Open division riding in both the horsemanship and reining competitions.

> “I was pulled out first for the pattern in horsemanship and that went pretty well,” Carly said. “I had a lot of fun in the Reining, but just didn’t show hard enough. My horse was good and did everything I asked.”

Bedinghaus was one of only four riders competing in both horsemanship and Reining.

**NRHA Varsity Open Reining: Individual**  
Austin Jewell, Brookewood Equestrian Team  
Conyers, Georgia

Seventeen-year-old Austin Jewell has competed in the IEA for two years and made his second appearance at the Western National Finals.

> “My horse showed great for me today. He was a great lead changer and we had some pretty circles. I didn’t get stopped as well as I would have liked, but I thought it was a good pattern overall. I really like this program because it gives people a chance to ride and show horses that wouldn’t be involved otherwise.”

Jewell also represented the IEA in the second annual NRHA Interscholastic Reining Championship, which consisted of the top four youth riders of the IEA and the top four NRHyA riders. Austin finished second by just a half point after a ride-off for the title. Austin and his dad, Kevin, show in NRHA events with the guidance of NRHA Professional Dave Moore, Florida.

**NRHA Varsity Intermediate Reining: Individual**  
Aurie Schmieding, Pinewood Prep School  
John’s Island, South Carolina

Aurie Schmieding, rode to the Intermediate Reining championship. The 16-year-old incoming high school junior has been participating in the IEA competitions for the last two years and this was her first trip to Nationals.

> “I used to show when I was younger, so the Equestrian Program at Pinewood Prep was definitely a drawing card for me to the school. This was the first year I have ever competed in Reining,” said Schmieding.
NRHA Future Intermediate Reining: Individual
Caroline Gute, Autumn Rose Farm Equestrian Team
Plain City, Ohio

Caroline Gute topped the Future Intermediate Reining division. At the tender age of 14, Caroline Gute has been competing at NRHA events for the last two years and earned the 2011 NRHA Youth 13 & Under Reserve World Championship.

NRHA Sportsmanship Award
Holly Phillips, Autumn Rose Farm Equestrian Team
Plain City, Ohio

NRHA Outstanding Western Horse
Tuf to Hang With
Provided by Lipps Horse Training & Jeromy Lipps

High Point Cross Over Rider
Haley Ruffner, Alfred University IE Team
Alfred, New York

This title is awarded to the rider who competes in both the western and hunt seat disciplines. Haley Ruffner earned the title by qualifying for both the individual western and hunt seat National Finals in 2012.

Western Upper School Awards
Champion: KM Equestrian Team, Findlay, Ohio
Rsv. Champion: Autumn Rose Farm Equestrian Team, Plain City, Ohio

Western Middle School Awards
Champion: Dare Equestrian Team, Hilliard, Ohio
Rsv. Champion: Hammond School, Hopkins, South Carolina

Team Spirit Award
Autumn Rose Farm Equestrian Team
Plain City, Ohio

Autumn Rose Farm Equestrian Team received the Team Spirit award for their great attitude and participation throughout the Finals event.
Celebrating the Decade

Upset that their equestrian middle and high school students did not receive the respect for athletic prowess, as did the riders’ siblings and friends who participated in other sport activities, two trainer/coaches developed an equestrian competition concept so the children could be recognized for the athletes they are. The coaches thought these exceptional athletes should, too, have the ability to earn letter jackets and trophies and, most important, gain the learning experience that comes with team sports—while excelling as an individual.

In 2000, Roxane Lawrence and Wayne Ackerer, Ohio-based career trainers/coaches, presented the interscholastic competition idea to two adult riders—Myron Leff (a business and marketing consultant) and Timothy Boone (a lawyer)—in Ackerer’s barn in Delaware, Ohio. Each agreed the idea that had merit. Leff wrote the business and marketing plan; Boone focused on legal and rule-development; all done with “horse expertise” guidance from Lawrence and Ackerer. Ollie Griffith—renowned Western horseman, judge and current Ohio State University equestrian coach—later joined the group. These people are the founders of the IEA. However, the kids are the story.

The student-riders backgrounds are varied—from under privileged to the very privileged. It does not matter. The IEA offers a level playing field for each participant. There is no need to own a horse—nor can any rider show on their horse, if they do own one. In fact, every
IEA Goals

- To encourage recognition for middle and secondary school equestrians and to promote the equestrian as an athlete.
- To provide riders with organized competitive opportunities.
- To introduce new riders to equine sports.
- To promote the IEA among its constituencies.
- To provide riders with opportunities to further their education in equine sports and equine-related matters.
- To encourage liaison with other equestrian associations for the betterment of equestrian sports.
- To encourage a higher standard of coaching and instruction.
- To provide information concerning the creation and development of mounted and non-mounted equestrian programs.
- To establish and enforce IEA rules, standards and policies.
- To keep pace with the continuing process of equestrian sports and to encourage good horsemanship.
- To generally promote the common interests of riding instruction and competition, and education on matters related to all segments of the horse industry.
- To develop team and individual sportsmanship.
- To establish a foundation to support the continuing mission of the IEA.

competition, from local to National Finals, is run in a blind-draw format. The riders compete on unfamiliar horses in supplied tack. It is all about performance and skill of the rider, not the value of the horse. Most of the mounts are school-owned horses donated for use during the competition and returned to stable of ownership. Moms and dads really like the fact that IEA provides an affordable format for their child as they build equestrian skills.

Riders compete in three disciplines, Hunt Seat, Western and Saddle Seat, in individual and team events performing various techniques. Hunt Seat which are flat and fence classes, Western which are horsemanship and reining classes and Saddle Seat which are rail and pattern classes. There are four ability levels: beginner, novice, intermediate and open.

Competitions are held throughout the school year at various barns/arenas within each local area. Those riders, and teams, who accrue enough points-through placing in events-become eligible for regional competitions.

Those winning at the regional level progress to Zone Finals. The Zone winners qualify for IEA National Finals. The 2012-2013 season Hunt Seat National Finals will be held at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse, New York. The Western National Finals will be held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, during the NRHA Derby.

From the seed of an idea, presented in the horse barn and two years of development, the IEA has grown into a non-profit organization (501c.3) that has more than 6,000 equestrian student-riders in grades six-twelve across North America. In its 10th year of operation, the IEA has become the largest “feeder organization” to college equestrian programs. Many of the IEA champion riders earn college scholarships to participate either in the Intercollegiate Horse Association (IHSA) or the NCEA/NCAA programs. The IEA also provides scholarships to many riders who qualify for the National Finals.

Important to acknowledge is the fact that IEA’s organic growth has come primarily from volunteer parents, relatives and coaches. Dues, entry fees, donations and sponsorships support the organization financially.

IEA growth has also been developed from an alliance with the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA), and affiliations with the Intercollegiate Horse Association (IHSA), United States Jumper Association (USHJA) and the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF).

The IEA was established to provide competitive and educational opportunities through equestrian athletics. Good horsemanship and honorable participation are priorities at every event. It is the responsibility of all attendees to foster a spirit of belongingness, an atmosphere of community enjoyment and a mutual respect for all participants.

As students return for the new school year, the 2012-2013 IEA season is in its early stages. Returning IEA student-riders and coaches can now contact their Zone representatives to enroll for the new season. The Membership office contact is 877-RIDE IEA (877-743-3432) or Info@rideiea.org.

For new riders/teams, the contact is Carol Sterrett, the IEA Membership Marketing Coordinator. Sterrett assists with new team formation. Her contact information is 404-931-1149 or carolsterrett@rideiea.org.

Reprinted from the September 2012 Issue of the Paid Hor Se
Standing 16.3 hands high, Cornell University's “Clifford” is an aptly named — big, red horse.

The 16-year-old chestnut Warmblood gelding has become familiar and famous to those involved in the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA). This year marked Clifford's break-out moment in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) when he was named Leading Hunt Seat Horse at IEA's National Championships in Syracuse, New York.

Clifford was accepted as a part of Cornell's equestrian team six years ago. He was originally donated to a different university department, who approached the head coach asking if he would work out for the team. After a short trial, it became clear that Clifford would be a perfect fit, and the rest is history.

Right off the bat, Clifford became a favorite among the riders on Cornell's team. That fan base expanded to a much larger group after Clifford was used at the 2006 IHSA Nationals in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where Clifford had his first brush with fame. As with IEA, it is rare for a rider to draw the same horse twice at an IHSA show. However, at this particular show, the same rider drew Clifford in both the Team and Individual Open Flat classes. She and Clifford won the individual class and when it came time for the team class, Clifford helped her to become one of the top three. In order to
settle on a winner, the judge asked the remaining riders to display an extended trot without their irons. The judge then called the riders into the center of the ring one by one, until Clifford was the only horse left to show off his signature extended trot for an entire solo lap around the Harrisburg arena.

Clifford has appeared at five more IHSA National Championships since 2006, and has upheld the name he has made for himself every single time. His most recent noteworthy performance was at the 2011 Nationals in Lexington, Kentucky, where his riders won both Open Team Over Fences and Open Team Flat.

While Clifford's ability to excel at anything asked of him in the show ring, he has earned the support of every rider lucky enough to draw him at a show. His consistently calm demeanor under saddle has made him the first choice of coaches and beginner riders as well. When a less experienced rider is in the saddle, Clifford seems to sense the need to go as slow as possible. He is an excellent teacher because he does exactly what you ask him to do. If you ask for something correctly, he will respond correctly. If you are unsure of what you are asking of him, you will get Clifford's version of it. One of his most appreciated qualities is that he can take a joke. He doesn't get offended if you make a mistake, so coaches trust him to take care of riders in the lower divisions. No matter what your riding ability is, it is undeniable that he is a horse with a lot of heart that will always give you his best effort.

Clifford also has a very unique and entertaining personality. He's the source of constant comic relief in the barn, even at the earliest morning practices. We often joke that if there was such a thing as an extra-large pony, Clifford would be it. He is very adept at untying himself while being groomed and tacked up, and if there is something for him to get his mouth on or step in, you can bet that he will. He has gotten his foot into the muck bucket while cross-tied more times than I can count, and will do just about anything else he needs to do in order to get your attention. One time we had him in the grooming stall at a horse show and in the one second that no one was watching him, he managed to pull down every lead rope and lunge line that was hanging on the wall and then proceeded to look at us with the most innocent look on his face as if to say, “Ummm, hello, is someone planning on cleaning up this mess?”

Aside from being a huge goof-ball, Clifford is also a pleasure to be around because of his tolerance for many different people handling him on the ground. He is perfect when getting a bath, having his mane pulled, and clipping his muzzle, legs, and bridle path. The only thing he absolutely cannot stand is having his ears clipped. Once he figures out what you’re trying to do, he will back all the way down the barn aisle to avoid it.

Anyone who has ever observed Clifford in the holding area at a horse show probably remembers him most for the very distinctive way he decides to stand. If you try to make him stand square and even on all four legs, he will dance around and never stand still. However, as soon as you let him park out with his legs spread way apart and one hind foot cocked, he will stand all day long.

No matter what your riding ability is … he is a horse with a lot of heart that will always give you his best effort.

— Emily Kowalchik

By Emily Kowalchik
Things just get a little difficult when trying to get a rider’s stirrups adjusted evenly while he is standing crooked and with his hind leg cocked!

Saying that Clifford is a special and hardworking horse would be an understatement. During the school year, he carries many different riders in every division to multiple blue ribbon wins at IHSA and IEA shows. When classes are over for the year, he continues to show in the 3’ hunters and equitation divisions on the “A” circuit. This summer I was lucky enough to bring Clifford home to Ohio with me to take to horse shows around the Midwest. It has truly been a testament to just how well-known Clifford is and how much the IEA has grown. No matter where he goes, people recognize him from his appearances at IEA Nationals and want to say hello and show their appreciation to this very deserving horse.

Emily Kowalchik is a rising senior at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, where she serves as co-captain of the school’s IHSA Equestrian Team. While in high school, she was a member of Beckett Run Equestrian Team based out of Hamilton, Ohio, helping them become the Upper School Champion Team at IEA Nationals in 2009. When not riding for Cornell during the school year, Emily continues to ride and show various horses with David Beisel Stables in Goshen, Ohio.
From Syracuse, New York...

Alfred University
Andrews Osborne Academy
Huntington Meadow Stables
Wachusett Equestrian Team
Cazenovia College
Connie Chave
Cornell University

Ironwood Stables
Stonegate Farm
The Grier School
Heritage Stables
Morrisville State College
TAPS Equestrian Team
Smoke Tree Farm

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West Texas A&M University
The Holy Innocents' Horsemanship Award

You must realize that your horse is an athlete, and in order to ride well, you must focus on the horse, not yourself.
manship Award

The Holy Innocents’ Horsemanship Award encourages IEA riders to better their knowledge of the horse and the sport in which they compete. This year, approximately 250 exhibitors participated.

First introduced in 2009, the test was patterned after the well known Emerson Burr Horsemanship Award featured at USEF’s National Pony Finals each year. Both awards are composed of a written test and a practical phase where riders are tested on all aspects of horsemanship. Any IEA rider is eligible to take the written test, which includes questions regarding the horse’s health, fitness, performance, and overall well being. Most of these questions are taken straight from the Pony Club Manuel, which riders are encouraged to study in preparation for the written test.

There were 25 written questions and the test takers were divided and graded between middle school and high school students. Both took the same test. Both were given the same essay/tie breaker question. There was one middle school participant in the final top six. The top four participants invited back for the practical were all high school students. There has never been a middle school student in the top four.

“You are participating in a clinic with a well known clinician. You are instructed to bring your horse to the ring and begin warming up independently until the clinic begins. What would you do?” was the essay/tie breaker question this year.

After the written portion, the top four scores are invited to return for the judges’ practical assessment of their horsemanship. Put in front of a horse, they could be asked to wrap a standing bandage, shipping bandage, go over different pieces of tack and equipment, or even something as simple as identify parts of the horse. In this way, the judges can determine which rider is best prepared to care for an animal and encourage its best performance.

The practical test and the final placings are up to the judges’ discretion, and are announced along with the sportsmanship award and team results at the end of the competition.

Although you may want to study your Pony Club Manuel and review key aspects of horsemanship, the best way to prepare for this test is through practice and experience. Become a good horseman, not just a good test taker. Groom and tack your own horse, wrap him at the horse shows, and learn how to take care of any illness or injury you may come across. Know what your horse eats, what shoes he wears, and what maintenance he requires. Learn how to decide what bit to school in, what exercises to practice, and learn how to best ride each horse you sit on.

Becoming a good horseman will make you a better rider and improve your horse’s performance. Ultimately, you must realize that your horse is an athlete, and in order to ride well, you must focus on the horse, not yourself.

Natalie Sterrett was the winner of this year’s 2012 Holy Innocents’ Horsemanship Award. Natalie also won the award in 2010.
I stepped foot into the horse show world by chance one night starting with my mother and my school.

As my mom sat through class rotation for my school — Westminster School in Atlanta, Georgia — she began to talk to a woman whose daughter shared some of my classes. By coincidence, this was one of the mothers of a daughter who participated on my school’s new Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team.

At the beginning of my freshman year in high school, I had never competed in a horse show before. The only time I rode was at summer camp, and I began to feel that this four-week period was not enough to last me the rest of the year. So, after my mom came home from class rotation and told me about this team where anybody could ride even without a horse, the choice was clear.

We called the trainer/coach that directed the team and set up a lesson to see if I had the basic skills necessary to compete. I showed up in blue jeans, tennis shoes, and no helmet. The size of my foot was so large that I had to ride on my toes because I could not fit my foot all the way into the stirrup. Fortunately though, I had some kind of skill because my trainer gave me a list of gear and set my next lesson time.

When I completed a series of lessons I went out to a show, and since I had never been to one before and knew a total of two people on the team, I stood awkwardly next to a tent watching. Even though I was not even sure it was ours. But, it obviously brandished a “Westminster Wildcats” banner.

My time spent awkwardly standing there finally ended when I saw a familiar face, a girl named Brittany whom I knew from school and is a much more experienced rider than I. Since her class had ended, she took the time to explain to me what complex things like “being on the right lead” were, and during my time at the show my mom witnessed a girl being thrown into a fence and claimed this was the scariest sport I had ever tried.

While my mom feared my falling, something she still has to get used to, I most feared what guys at my school would say. Since I am the only guy on my team I get a lot of attention because of it; but the truth is, I really do not deserve the attention because there are girls on the team who are much better than I am, yet get no attention.

To my surprise, however, instead of being ridiculed I got, and still do, compliments on how they think it takes guts to “wear stretchy pants and ride a horse.” I have even been told that I am the smartest guy in school for joining a predominately female team for what is perceived as a girl’s sport.

No matter my super awkward or very confused experiences, I would say the best part about being on Westminster’s IEA team is the friendly faces. It really did not take long at all to get to know the girls on the team because of how friendly and supportive they were. Although, there were a couple instances where I felt out of place approaching a group of them at a show. The team moms were also extremely kind to me, but I must admit, the only reason I have ever been able to identify them is by matching the faces of their daughters to their own.

In time, the pitch-black and freezing-cold mornings melted away any awkward feelings left in me, and sometimes when I ride well in a class a coach I do not even know will compliment me on how I did. Due to the amount of fun I had at shows my first season I did not have to be convinced to sign up again. Because after I roll my stirrups up, I am happy that I got the chance to ride, a content feeling that other sports failed to provide.

IEA really gave me the chance to kindle a love for riding that I never knew existed. — Jack Weathersby
existed inside of me, get to know people I never would have otherwise spent time with, and it also opened the door for the possibility to show after the season has ended.

Although camp originally taught me how to ride, IEA gave me a chance to show with people I knew, which was a major benefit and improvement to showing on my own and feeling lonely. IEA also provides an element of suspense, because you never know the kind of horse you will draw. That is the fun part. As well as a team element that is missing in other types of showing. The first time I competed, some of the girls on the team lined up around the ring to coach me and tell me if I was on the wrong diagonal or lead. A valuable aid that came in handy with a second and third-place pin. Not bad for a new kid, right?

In the end, I might be one of a few guys that compete in my region, but it doesn’t matter; I do not feel out of place at all. Whether I am picking a stall or walking through a restaurant in my jodhpurs and show boots, I know that I have an opportunity to do something I love. Because when I sit in the saddle and slide my number to the outside, the light bulb turns on. It feels right.

I would like to thank my coach Betsy Aliffi for being extremely patient while coaching me.

Jack is a junior at Westminster School in Atlanta, Georgia. He has been riding for 8 years, mostly at Camp High Rocks in the summer. Jack has been competing in the JV Beginner division of the IEA for the past 2 years. Jack is looking forward to his 3rd year as an IEA member.
In Oklahoma City, as the hustle and bustle of the 2011 Morgan Grand National and World Championship Horse Show was underway, serenely nearby in Norman Oklahoma, a Morgan gelding was quietly grazing around amongst the tumbleweed in his pasture. Through an amazing twist of fate, 16-year-old exhibitor Veronica Llewellyn of Wadsworth, Ohio, and this unsuspecting Morgan, Gulfwind Wild Finale, were about to be introduced and tested to the highest degree, which neither could imagine.

Veronica and her 12-year-old Morgan gelding, Twelve Oaks Intrepid (Rebel), had just traveled 1,100 miles only to find out that competition for this pair was not to be! A veterinarian informed Veronica and her family that Rebel was not quite up to par and they were going to have to “sit this one out”. This type of news is always the true test of an athlete. Rebel and Veronica are not new to this level of competition. Their efforts and dedication had always been present from the time they began competing in Oklahoma in 2009. This year it seemed as though they were approaching a new level.

Veronica’s coach, Holly Parks Robinson, of HPR Show Stables, had just heard the devastating news and was crushed. As this news continued to spread behind the scenes at the show, the owners of Majic Stables, sisters Mary Shappee and Gert Shuckhart, literally appeared from around the corner with the possibility that they might be able to help. Shappee and Shuckhart are known for their dedication and allegiance to young riders and continue to mold the next generation while earning their share of top honors in Oklahoma from 2001 to the present. We really are all a giant family of horse people and when a fellow equestrian has an unfortunate and unforeseen circumstance, this group
of competitors are always there for each other. Was the impossible dream about to become a reality?

Robinson and Veronica with a slight ray of hope abounding, were then stopped by a young lady named Courtney Townsend, who informed them that she owned a Morgan along with her grandparents, Ed and Betty Edwards, who might do the job. "My trainer Mary Shappee called me just a few moments ago and told me of your predicament and I would like to help you. My horse is back at Majic Stables and you can make arrangements with Mary to try him out tonight, as I was told your class is tomorrow! I still have to ask my grandparents but I think it will be fine," she said.

At about 8:30 that night Veronica, her parents, Mike and Andrea, and Robinson set out for Majic Stables in Norman, Oklahoma. By this time Gulfwind was in his stall bedded down for the night, or so he thought. After a very quick test ride and jump, trainers Shappee and Robinson both saw the "click" and connection between horse and rider and agreed it was a go! Veronica Llewellyn was going to reach for the stars after all, because of the generosity and "majic" of the Majic Stables' family. Shappee and Shuckhart, with riders to school and take care of at the show and at home, graciously offered to bring Gulfwind Wild Finale to the fairgrounds by 6:30 the next morning.

The newly-formed partnership; Holly, Veronica and Gulfwind began a whirlwind journey at 11:30 a.m., with a 20-minute schooling session for the Low Working Hunter Division. When interviewed, Holly said, "I basically went through a trainers’ short course with my rider, as one would do when coaching for interscholastic riding. Never did I imagine that we would be faced with trying to pull together a completely strange horse and rider team that met the night before! You train all year for your own horse for a competition of this caliber and magnitude.

For 35 years, the Grand National and World Championship Morgan Horse Show has topped the charts as it awards more than $300,000 in prize money to more than 1100 horses and exhibitors from 45 states and three nations.

When interviewed, Robinson revealed, "It was last minute to say the least and the only thing I could turn to was my IEA experience. As the HPR Ashwood Farm Team coach for the last five years I learned to do a quick read of my rider and the mount that they’ve just drawn. The challenge is to take the intrinsic talents of both horse and rider and in a very short time brief the rider as to how to use their individual psychological and physical skills to hopefully create a bond, and if you can do that, then you can maybe get that “click” or feel. For me, Holly continued, it’s understanding the inside of my rider, and in the IEA arena I usually have just met the horse! It’s definitely a quick study.

"After 30 plus years as a professional trainer at top shows across the country, it is the IEA arena that has been the most unique learning experience and challenge for me, to say the least," stated Holly. "I am forever humbled by the unassuming jumping pony to the long-strided Warmblood that graciously struts its stuff and packs our riders around the ring. IEA has become an essential tool for me and my riders who show in and outside of IEA.

Over the past five years, Veronica Llewellyn has accumulated many experiences on a vast array of horses and ponies that have taught her volumes as she competed on her coach’s Hunt Seat Team, and newly-formed Saddle Seat Team. These wonderful IEA equines played the biggest and key role in her ability to perform on a strange horse at the last minute in top-shelf company.

Gulfwind Wild Finale and Veronica Llewellyn found that ‘click’ as they captured the Low Working Hunter Reserve World Championship title. Apparently that wasn’t enough; they decided to ride to win the Grand National Hunter Seat Equitation 17 & under class, the Over Fences class, and finished third after a call back in the AMHA (American Morgan Horse Association) Over Fences Gold Medal Class. Veronica in the winners’ circle beamed down at her trainer and quipped, “Great draw!”

Veronica is now a senior and after battling the recent high temperatures during her lesson just the other day she walked up to her trainer and said, “I want to show all three seats in IEA this year! It’s my last year! As other HPR/Ashwood riders want more experiences, as well recruiting more Saddle Seat riders and now Western is top priority.”

As the new season of IEA is around the corner, Veronica and her horse, Twelve Oaks Intrepid, are happy to report that they are both 150 percent back in training and are looking forward to the 2012 Grand National and World Championship Morgan Horse Show in October. But, only if she can compete in IEA too!

IEA is the ultimate challenge, keep it in your hip pocket, you never know when you just might need to use it!
STUDENTS IN GRADES 6–12: TAKE THE REINS AND JOIN THE IEA

No Need To Own A Horse!

Riders in grades 6–12 can compete with teams in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA). School-age children with various levels of experience compete in Hunt Seat, Western and Saddle Seat divisions throughout the school year. Riders not only compete for individual points, but for their team as well.

It’s fun and challenging—and there is no need to own a horse! Horses are provided to each rider at every event. All mounts are selected by a draw. Moms and dads really like that the IEA provides an affordable format for their child, as they build their equestrian skills. Many of the IEA senior championship riders receive college scholarships based upon their winning performance at the IEA National Finals, too.

Founded in 2002, the IEA has over 3200 members on 200 teams in 31 states. For additional information about the IEA or answers to questions concerning team organization, please visit the IEA website: www.rideiea.org or call the membership office at: 877-RIDE-IEA (877-743-3432).

www.rideiea.org