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Printed in the U.S.A.
The number one destination site on my proverbial “bucket list” has always been Hawaii. In celebration of a significant birthday this year, my husband and I took a trip to the islands of Oahu and Maui. While we were there, we set up some informational meetings with prospective IEA members too. It was fascinating to learn more about the equestrian world on these islands where horse lovers enjoy constant views of paradise, but also have some significant obstacles to their participation.

On Oahu, we planned a day to travel to the Dillingham Ranch, a famous historical site on the opposite side of the island from our hotel in Waikiki (also the film site of the movie, “Fifty First Dates”). On our approach, we enjoyed views of secluded, sandy beaches to our right, and dramatic mountains on the left with the 2,700-acre ranch in between. We gazed at the sights around us, and suddenly, parachutes of all colors began to fall from the blue sky. Apparently, there is a skydiving school, right next to the Dillingham Ranch. “Doesn’t that scare the horses?” was our first question upon arrival. “Only when they miss their mark and land in the middle of our riding field,” was the answer. Paradise indeed.

The Ranch featured a polo field on the beach side, and significant outdoor riding areas that included cross-country jumps, fenced ring space, and trails stretching all the way to the foot of the mountains. There was a lovely clubhouse for our meeting with huge palm trees overhead. The horses did not live in a central barn with stalls on either side of an aisle (like Ohio), but instead, they lived in personalized paddocks with run-in sheds, or in large fields with other horses. The cross ties were located in a breezy area between two trees, and the horse we observed was basking in the luxury of the great outdoors while enjoying his daily grooming.

Our meeting was well attended with about 30 individuals representing multiple disciplines, and they were a mix of coaches, parents, and students. Although polo is widely prevalent in Hawaii, the equestrians in Oahu currently do not have any other form of equine competition (a local show circuit has recently stopped offering events). There are very few horse trailers on the island, and it is difficult to purchase a horse because the cost of shipping from the mainland (over 2,000 miles across the Pacific) can be daunting.

However, these are dedicated horse lovers, and they will not be thwarted! Most of the riding students in Oahu are well-rounded equestrians. They have experience in polo, dressage, western gaming, horsemanship, hunters and jumpers. They ride a variety of horses and learn a wide range of disciplines, so they are primed and ready for IEA competitions with a draw-based format.

I expect that we will see some riders from Hawaii at next year’s IEA Finals. They are organizing themselves to begin as an extension of Zone 10...”
What does an Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) Show Steward do, anyway? Many riders, most parents, and even some coaches have asked this question at some point. The Steward's fundamental role is to protect the interests of everyone at the show—exhibitors, show management, judges and, perhaps most importantly, the horses. She/he is responsible for maximizing rider safety and horse welfare, promoting fairness in all aspects of the competition, interpreting the IEA rules and, in short, preserving the integrity of the IEA format. The Steward, along with the Judge, is a critical horse show official, required by the rules to be present at all times during IEA shows.

What does this mean, in practice? Here are some common issues that Stewards are called upon to deal with at IEA shows, and some tips on how you can best work with a Steward to address issues that may arise.

Watch the Pre-show Horse Schooling
The morning schooling session is a critical opportunity for the Steward, along with riders and coaches, to observe and evaluate the horses. The Steward watches each horse carefully to assess its suitability to the level at which it will be shown. For example, if the horse will be shown in the varsity open class, is it capable of jumping 2'6"? If it will be shown in the future novice division, is it quiet and steady? Does it show signs of spooking, stopping, getting strong or fresh, or other problematic behavior? Is the horse sound, and is the equipment safe and appropriate?

Monitoring the morning schooling session can give the Steward a good idea of how the horses are likely to perform for the rest of the day. If the horses appear safe, sound, and suitable for the classes in which they will show; it is likely there will be few re-rides, re-draws, or horses pulled from the competition. If, however, one or two horses seem unsuitable for some reason, the Steward will know to keep an eye on those horses throughout the day. In the rare case that a horse seems entirely unsuitable or unsound, the Steward will request the show management to pull them from the competition before it starts.

Suitability is the Key Factor in Horse Draws
The Steward is also responsible for monitoring the draw to make sure that it is done fairly, in accordance with IEA rules and, most importantly, that horses are suitable for the level of class they will be shown in.

In the IEA context, “suitability” does not mean how attractive a rider will look with his equine partner. Rather, “suitability” has to do with rider safety and horse welfare. Is the rider capable of safely riding the horse? And is the horse capable of carrying the rider—i.e., is a rider either so tall or so heavy that the horse’s back or soundness could be affected? In general, a rider over 150 pounds or 5’8” tall should not ride a large pony, and riders over 175 pounds may require larger horses. However, a tall rider who draws a narrow or small horse is not entitled to redraw just because they would look prettier on a larger horse.

Re-ride Requests are Governed by a Three-part Test
We all have the occasional horse show where things simply don’t go as planned. We miss a lead change at the end of the ring, resulting in a bad distance to a corner jump. Or we lean up the horse’s neck at a good distance, resulting in an embarrassing chip or, worse yet, a refusal. We don’t have sufficient contact, and the horse runs out at a jump. Or the horse tests us with a little spook, requiring a circle before the next jump. The possibilities for mistakes like this on course, or on the flat, are limitless. But most of the time, as any experienced trainer will tell you, it’s not the horse’s fault! Rather, these mistakes are usually the product of a young rider on a horse that she doesn’t know very well, resulting in a poor decision or reaction at a critical moment on the course.

Nevertheless, there are times when even the best horse has a rough day. When this happens, the coach—not the rider or parent—should promptly ask the Steward for a re-ride. In deciding whether to grant a re-ride, the Steward applies a three-part test, considering whether (1) through no fault of the rider (2) the horse has performed so poorly that (3) it is impossible to fairly judge the rider’s ability. All three factors must be present for the re-ride to be granted. In most cases, the Steward will ask the judge whether he or she is capable of judging through the horse’s problematic performance. Often the judge is able to score the round, discounting the horse’s challenging behavior or even giving the rider extra credit for handling a tough situation well. So, even if a re-ride request is denied, the rider may be happily surprised to receive a good ribbon.
Similarly, if at any time during the show day a coach feels that her rider cannot safely ride the horse he’s drawn, she should discuss this with the Steward. The Steward can evaluate the horse, consult with show management, the horse provider, and the judge, and may allow the rider to ride another horse designated as the class alternate. Even if the request is denied, the rider can withdraw without penalty and have his fees refunded.

Be Aware of These Rule Violations

**Use of artificial aids**
Crops and spurs may only be carried or worn if specifically permitted in the horse descriptions provided to all coaches at the beginning of the show, or as posted during the show. It is the rider’s responsibility, as well as the coach’s, to know whether artificial aids may be used on a horse. If the horse description does not specify that crop or spurs are allowed, and a rider rides into the ring with either of these aids, he will be dismissed. Also, spurs are never allowed in the beginner classes; again, if they are worn, the rider will be dismissed.

**Tack adjustments**
It is the rider’s responsibility to check the tack, including the girth and saddle pads, before mounting. However, a rider may not touch or adjust any tack other than the stirrup length.

**Coaching from the sidelines**
There is no IEA rule that specifically prohibits coaching of riders from the ringside or in-gate. However, the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) rules state that “outside assistance” may be penalized at the judge’s discretion during equitation classes, and the IEA rules incorporate USEF rules by reference. Coaches, riders, and parents should be aware that many judges frown on this behavior, and should keep coaching during a class to the absolute minimum necessary for rider safety.

**Rider safety and horse welfare are paramount.**
The IEA rules allow the Steward to take appropriate action anytime that she feels rider safety or horse welfare is at issue. For example, the Steward can ask the judge to hold up a flat class if a particular horse or rider appears unsafe. Similarly, if horses are overcrowded in the mounting area, or too many spectators are congregating in an area reserved for the horses, the Steward can take appropriate action. As Sue Wentzel, IEA National Steward since 2003 says, “Every person at an IEA show shares the responsibility for safety. Whenever a coach, exhibitor, judge or show manager has safety or horse welfare concerns, he or she should feel free to speak to the Steward!”

**Katrina Weinig**
Katrina Weinig is a USEF “r” judge in Equitation and Hunters based in Washington DC, and has judged and stewarded numerous IEA shows in Zones 1 and 3. She managed the Stone Bridge IEA Team from 2008-2012, helping the team to Zone 3 Champion and National Reserve Champion High School in 2011. She can be reached at Katrina.weinig@gmail.com.
Here do you see yourself after high school? If I were my sophomore-self, I wouldn’t have needed half of a second to know my answer. I was going to attend college; study business and most certainly take part on an equestrian team. I had done hours of research on schools with National Collegiate Equestrian Association (NCEA) and Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) programs. I knew with my accomplishments, inside and outside of Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA), I could possibly qualify as a candidate. Later as I learned how much being on the team could save you financially; it seemed like the logical step to take. Many of the schools have really great programs with top-notch trainers. I wanted to go pro after I finished at my university and that was a big bonus too. However, all of those thoughts were washed away when life sent me in a different direction. The summer before my senior year of high school, I was offered a riding job at a brand new facility. It came with plenty of real sport horses to compete with and my chance at a one-in-a-million start. The only thing was, it came with a bit of a catch. The farm was located in the Netherlands. Waiting just across the water was a barn full of opportunity and a whole lot of unknown. So, just like any other somewhat crazy and impulsive 17 year old, I took the job.

According to Sierra Wilson, “… I still must say IEA was a large building block in my equestrian career.”
Today as my 19-year-old self, I cannot say I regret it in any way. I love every piece of what I do! My partner and I manage, ride, and care for a 16-stall barn and we assist people in international horse purchases. I train and make sale videos on hunters or equitation horses. It keeps me incredibly busy, but I would not have it any other way. Regardless of the change, I still must say IEA was a large building block in my equestrian career.

A big part of buying and selling hunters in Europe is being able to see a horse through all the distractions. Hunters don’t exist here. The idea does, but it is in no way, shape or form, a part of normal Equestrian sport. Figuring out which horses are worth trying and which ones won’t cut it, is a major task. Especially, considering each class level at a show can contain anywhere between 40 and 100 participants. Watching the schooling of the horses at an IEA show is very similar. You need to try to figure out how much of what they are doing is based on outside factors, and assess what type of ride it would need to get a desired performance. When I’m making videos, it’s very similar to an IEA show. There is a very limited amount of time for you to not only figure the horse out, but also how to display it in a way opposite of how it’s usually ridden.

The classic idea of two hands and two legs at all times, is not only an important part of IEA, it is a crucial factor when showing young horses for the first time. Each class at a normal horse show is only separated by height. Amateurs compete against pros, young horses against experienced horses, and any one of them might win. Like IEA, doing well in shows is just as important for the long-run as the short one. Not only do horses over here have to score points to move up each level, it plays a huge part in their price. Being a rider for primarily sale stables, higher returns are always an important goal, because that’s what keeps the whole system moving.

However, all of these points don’t even come close to having as much of an impact on my life as teamwork and simply riding. IEA gives kids a wonderful chance to sit on all types of horses and get hours in the show ring. Inspiring riders, not only to win but also to win on any horse they are handed, is an incredible mindset to teach. Nothing helps someone learn like doing. If you listen to the younger stories of most top professionals, they say how they rode anything and everything they could get. I still do. Every horse has something to teach you, just like every person. This brings me to my biggest point, teamwork is something you will need your entire life. Having a support system and being part of one is what makes the world go round. Selling horses isn’t a one-man show, it takes people everywhere talking and listening for what is needed. Teamwork is an essential part of having a successful farm. Everyone involved needs to be able to communicate easily and honestly, feel appreciated and work together. No matter what type of farm you have, sales, boarding, training, etc., there is no way to be on the right track unless everyone knows their strengths and uses them. A rider doesn’t win alone, only by working together can you build something to the top and appreciating that will keep you there.

So, where do you see yourself after high school? No matter if it is with a degree, riding professionally or for fun, I hope you remember where you started. Good basics and a strong work-ethic is a rare thing in our current world. I, for one, can’t thank IEA enough for teaching me that and so much more. The relationships it gave me I hope to keep throughout my life.

Keep working your butt off and keep chasing your dreams. Anything is truly possible and there is no limit to what you can achieve.

Sierra Wilson began riding at her mother, Alisha Metcalfe’s farm, Sylvan Stables. On her IEA team she claimed national championships in the future intermediate classes as well as the varsity open. The two-person middle school team won the IEA National Championship in 2010. Later Sierra went on to show in national hunter and equitation finals, before establishing herself in Europe.
ATH stands for Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship. PATH is the heart of therapeutic riding. The program helps enhance the chances for kids and adults with special needs to ride independently on a horse. PATH is an international organization whose mission, as found on their website (pathintl.org), states that PATH “promotes safety and optimal outcomes in equine-assisted activities and therapies for individuals with special needs.” PATH’s vision is to be “a global authority, resource and advocate for equine-assisted activities and therapies and the equines in this work that inspire and enrich the human spirit.” But what does that mean? I had the opportunity to talk with Kaye Marks, the Director of Marketing & Communications at Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International. Marks stated, “We at PATH want the safest possible experience and progress to the extent it can be for the rider. We also would like the best of the riders out there to come and help. We want this program to be accessed by the public.”

PATH International was founded in 1969. The North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) was the first organization to implement therapeutic riding. They wanted to make a safe and powerful therapeutic horseback riding program. Their goal was to have this type of program throughout United States and Canada. “This was an amazing group of people. They brought PATH together,” Marks stated.

PATH started with a focus on horseback riding as a form of therapy for individuals with both physical and cognitive disabilities. PATH founders came together to create a program; Equine-Assisted Activities and Therapies, also known as EAAT. They implemented many kinds of equine-assisted activities to be used in therapies. PATH’s website states, “not only did they (clients) do horseback riding, but they also did carriage driving; interactive vaulting, which is almost like gymnastics on horseback; equine-facilitated learning and mental health, which use the horse as a partner in cognitive and behavioral therapy, usually with the participation of a licensed therapist; groundwork and stable management.” Clients continue these forms of therapies today. Currently, PATH also has a program that works with war veterans and military personnel; Equine Services for Heroes. Equine Services for Heroes uses a variety of EAAT disciplines to help war veterans and members of the military. PATH continues to work on developing and implementing more disciplines and activities that will be beneficial to participants.
To become a part of PATH, you need to become a member. In addition to being a member, you could also become a PATH certified instructor and/or your barn could become certified as a member center. Membership provides the opportunity to network, attend conferences, access educational materials, and much more. Marks stated, “When people decide to become a member/member center, they are signing up to help with public awareness and for networking opportunities as well.” There are currently 8,000 members of PATH in different countries around the world. These members help assist more than 54,000 people with special needs. To become a member, complete the membership form, which is found under “PATH’s Membership Tab” on their website. An individual membership costs $60.

You could also become a certified instructor for PATH. An instructor is similar to the coach at your barn, only they would be implementing PATH activities and working with individuals with disabilities. The instructor is the person who is leading the activities for the PATH riders and helpers. To become a PATH certified instructor, you must attend PATH training. After attending the training, potential instructors are evaluated on topics they MUST know and understand. “Knowledge is key,” said Marks. There is a checklist of the things the instructors need to know in order to become certified. A written and open book test is also part of the process. Once successful with the written evaluations, the instructor works with an already certified PATH instructor and leads some sessions themselves. The last part of becoming certified is a workshop, where you show what you have learned and find out if you have passed. Much goes into becoming a PATH Certified Instructor. If you are interested, please check out PATH’s website to find out more.

A member center is a PATH certified stable that provides equine-assisted activities and therapies. Member centers vary from small, one-person programs to larger barns with several certified instructors and licensed therapists. According to PATH’s website, “In addition to therapeutic equitation, a center may offer any number of equine-assisted activities and therapies, including Hippotherapy, equine-facilitated mental health, driving, vaulting, trail riding, competition, ground work or stable management.” PATH has 850 member centers.

**What can IEA members do to help PATH?**

PATH needs volunteers, instructors and member centers. Get a friend to join you. If you have a friend who just loves horses and wants to make a difference, they can volunteer with you. No previous experience with horses is necessary. All you need to do is find a PATH member center on the PATH website. Identify the area in which you live and the locator will find a barn near you that is PATH Certified. It is that easy. In addition, PATH relies on donations, including donated horses. Consider having your IEA team do a fundraiser for PATH.

**Find a way to make a difference!**
“In April 2015 I had the great honor and pleasure of traveling to Oregon with IEA Executive Director Roxane Lawrence for a conference. While there, we met another conference attendee, Jan Harer, who spoke with us about the Oregon High School Equestrian Teams (OHSET) organization. It didn’t take long for us to decide to use our afternoon break to attend an OHSET horse show, which just happened to be taking place at the same time and in the same city as the conference. We arrived at the horse show to find many horse/rider pairs riding around the warm-up area in matching long-sleeved polo shirts with team names embroidered on the front and back numbers embroidered on the back. I was somewhat surprised at the variety of horse breeds represented (Quarter Horses, Paints, Thoroughbreds, Warm Bloods, Arabians, etc.), but truly amazed by the variety of saddles I saw: hunt seat, dressage, western pleasure, and roping just to name a few.”
Just like IEA, OHSET shows include both a team and individual competition. The riders belong to teams sponsored by their high school and they compete for individual points as well as team points. They earn points during three regular season competitions in a bid to qualify for the state show at the end of the season as individual riders and as a team.

But unlike IEA, the competitors provide their own horse (or horses). They are welcome to bring more than one equine partner to the show. In fact, they can bring a different mount for each event they enter!

I had a chance to sit down with two OHSET riders, Allison Byrne of the Barlow High School team and Catrina Avalon of the Beaverton High School team, and ask them what they thought of their unique organization.

Ms. Byrne replied that learning to work together as a team was her favorite aspect of OHSET competition; that it is more important to support your teammates as you work toward a common goal rather than just competing for yourself like you would at a regular horse show. She also likes the required long-sleeved polo shirt uniform because she feels it keeps the focus on quality riding, not on having the fanciest or most expensive show clothes.

Ms. Avalon loves that there are classes in so many riding disciplines offered, which allows her to compete in events as different as team penning and Dressage at the same show on the same weekend. She also stated that she can earn a varsity letter from her school, which makes her feel like Equestrian is respected as a sport.

I also learned that OHSET does not award ribbons for class placement at regular season shows. When I asked Ms. Avalon what she thought of this, she replied that she found more value in “winning the experience” than in just winning a ribbon.

For more information on Oregon High School Equestrian Teams (OHSET) shows, or to start an affiliate organization in your state, visit the official website, OHSET.com.

**Amanda Garner**

Amanda Garner is an IHSA coach, IHSA and IEA steward, IEA board member, and enthusiastic supporter of young equestrians nationwide. She lives in Dahlonega, Georgia.
The IEA holds a TRIVIA CONTEST with prizes every month on Facebook. Follow the IEA on Facebook (IEA - Interscholastic Equestrian Association) to learn more.

1. True or False: Horses are colorblind.
2. What is a horse saying when it squeals?
3. What is most likely happening when a horse stops eating, stretches its neck out and opens its mouth showing its teeth?
4. What sounds does a horse make using just its nostrils? It’s a friendly greeting to other horses, people or animals.
5. True or False: When a horse swishes their tail it may be a sign that they are irritated, warning other horses to keep their distance.

Take A Joke

Q: Why did the horse cross the road?
A: Because somebody shouted HAY!

Q: When do vampires like horse racing?
A: When it's neck-and-neck.

Q: What did the waiter say to the horse?
A: “I can’t take your order. That’s not my stable.”

Q: What did the horse say when it fell?
A: “I’ve fallen and I can’t giddy up!”

Q: Where do horses shop?
A: Old Neigh-vy

Got a funny horse joke that you would like to share? Email it to mckenzie@rideiea.org to get it featured in the next issue.
1. False. Horses have dichromatic or two-color vision.
2. When a horse squeals, it is a sign that they are annoyed or angry.
3. They are choking.
5. True. While a tail swishing can also simply be to keep away bugs, it often is seen as a sign of irritation.
The Arnold Sports Festival, the largest multi-sport festival in the country and birthplace to the world-renowned Arnold Classic Professional Men’s Bodybuilding Championships, attracts around 175,000 sports and fitness enthusiasts to watch thousands of athletes from 80 countries compete in 50 sport events including 13 Olympic events. For the first time, the festival included the Arnold Kids Fitness EXPO. This EXPO focused on youth sports, demonstrations, clinics and exhibitions. Youth competed in sports such as cheerleading, table tennis and the Survival Race, but also Olympic Sports such as archery, boxing, fencing, tae kwon do, swimming and Equestrian.

On Saturday and Sunday, March 7 and 8, the IEA held two youth Western competitions in which 21 teams in Zone 5 participated in the first-ever Arnold Horse Show. IEA executive director, Roxane Lawrence also presented a Hunt Seat demonstration, portraying the difference between Hunt Seat and Western disciplines to the audience. Arnold, as in Arnold Schwarzenegger, hosted the IEA show during the Arnolds Kids Fitness EXPO at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus, Ohio. Plans are in the works to participate at the 2016 Arnold Horse Show.

“We were extraordinarily excited to participate at the Arnold Classic,” said Roxane Lawrence co-founder of the IEA. “This is further validation and recognition that these young people, who ride horses, are indeed wonderful athletes. It is also special because the IEA was started here in Columbus.”
When you think about IEA, you don’t picture Girl Scout cookies. But for Sycamore Hills IEA team in Tennessee and Circle C Scouts in North Carolina, that is one of the first things they think about. These two teams are the first of their kind in the country. Many people don’t realize that Girl Scout councils across the country have equestrian programs. While some of those programs are offered just during the summer, many run year round with full lesson programs, and even have local show teams.
Circle C Scouts began with just three high school members, and grew to five over their first season. Cathy Thacker is the coach of Circle C Scouts, which rides out of Circle C Equestrian Center at the Keyauwee Program Center in Sophia, North Carolina. Cathy feels that the IEA and the Girl Scouts make for a great partnership. She states, “Our team really saw the Girl Scout mission of building girls of courage, confidence and character transform from a mission to a reality through our IEA experience. I saw the courage it took for our team to travel and ride unfamiliar horses, after years of riding our steady school horses. I could see the increasing confidence they felt after ‘surviving’ their first class at the first show to their last class at the last show, where everyone’s ride had improved and was reflected in the placings. Finally the strength of character that we saw them exhibit over the season by supporting one another, helping out when there was a need, and handling the results of their class with grace and humility.” The Circle C Scout team motto is, “Ride Like A Girl Scout! Courage! Confidence! Character!” and Cathy feels the girls really lived up to that motto this past season.

Sycamore Hills IEA, based out of the equestrian center at Camp Sycamore Hills in Ashland City, Tennessee, began when two of our Vaqueras (older-girl volunteer program) mentioned that their IEA team was disbanding last spring. After a little research, we decided to start the high school team and had eight registered riders (in just two divisions!). Six of these riders were not only new to IEA, but new to showing as well, especially since none of the riders own a horse. As you can imagine, we were a little nervous going into the first weekend of shows. To the utter delight of the girls, every rider who attended those first two shows placed in their classes. One of my newest riders, Haley Jackson, summed up the experience perfectly: “I had no idea that we could walk into our first competition as a team, and go home with not only a smile on our faces, but also with knowing that we, Girl Scouts from Camp Sycamore Hills, came in as the ‘new kids’ and placed at our first competition.”

Both teams had a very successful first season, with riders placing in nearly every class they entered, and Sycamore Hills IEA had three riders qualify for the Regional Finals. Both teams are looking forward to another great season in the fall. While these two teams may be the first Girl Scout affiliated teams in the country, with the excellent equestrian programs offered by Girl Scout councils, I doubt they will be the last.}

For more information on Circle C Scouts or the equestrian programs and camps offered by Girl Scouts Carolinas Peaks to Piedmont, contact Cathy Thacker at cthacker@girlscoutsp2p.org. For information on Sycamore Hills IEA or equestrian programs and camps offered by Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee, please contact Marianne England at mengland@gsmidtn.org. Both facilities are run by CHA certified instructors.

Marianne England  
Marianne is the Assistant Equestrian Manager for Girl Scouts of Middle Tennessee. She grew up in the Chicago area riding hunters, and showed on the A circuit previously as an amateur rider. She showed show IHSA for Midway College, and then transplanted to Tennessee while working on her Master’s degree at Middle Tennessee State University. She designs and implements Girl Scout programs, cares for Camp Sycamore Hills’ 40-horse herd, and coaches the Sycamore Hills IEA team.
or hunt seat riders, a safety helmet is traditional, standard equipment, and acquiring an appropriate helmet is far from a gray area. Parents should consider many factors when shopping for a rider's helmet.

A properly fitted riding helmet is the most essential piece of equipment that a hunt seat rider needs. Long gone are the days when elegant black velvet helmets, the kind you might see as a prop in a Ralph Lauren store, were “de rigueur.” Those items of mere apparel, with a tidy bow at the back pointing up for commoners and down for hunt staff, were made obsolete in the 70s when the AHSA, now United States Equestrian Federation (USEF), the national governing body for most equestrian sports in the U.S., made wearing an “approved helmet” a rule for hunt seat competitors.

Today, helmets worn at horse shows in general must be “ATSM-SEI” approved. The ATSM, or American Society for Testing and Materials, tests helmets worn for equestrian use differently from those for other sports, making modern helmets very equestrian-sport specific. The testing equipment used simulates a blow to the head sustained by a hoof or a fall on a jump standard.

Hand-me-downs for IEA riders should be limited to outgrown breeches and coats, but never helmets. Aunt Betty might have forgotten that her daughter sustained a fall, but the helmet holds a grudge. Once a rider has had an accident involving any impact to the head, a helmet is no longer viable. While the helmet might look perfect on the outside, the inner foam may be compromised, making it less protective. Even if a rider has remained vertical during the life of the helmet, it should be replaced every five years due to the fact that the helmet will degrade over time from heat, sweat and use and may not provide the same level of protection as a new helmet. Additionally, helmet technology is constantly evolving and improving. Replacing your helmet every five years will allow you to take advantage of these new innovations.

No matter how careful the rider, accidents can and do happen. When sized and fitted correctly a helmet can make a big difference. While you can shop online for a helmet, nothing takes the place of working with an experienced helmet fitter, ideally a certified helmet fitter. This cannot be stressed strongly enough. An experienced helmet fitter will make sure the most important areas of helmet safety are covered; size and fit.
Special thank you to our model, Eva Merela. Eva is a former IEA rider for the Andrews Osborne Academy IEA Equestrian Team 2007–2009. She was coached by IEA Executive Director/Founder, Roxane Lawrence.

Dana Miller is a partner at Chagrin Saddlery (located in Chagrin Falls, Ohio,) Certified Helmet Fitter and equestrian fashion blogger. In addition to managing retail store operations, she functions daily as an equestrian stylist. Passionate about equestrian trends, Dana maintains a busy schedule outfitting riders from all over the country, including top equitation competitors and IEA/IHSA Teams. This is her second contribution to Take the Reins. Dana’s daughter Skylar is in 9th grade and competes in the open division for the Park Place Equestrian Team, Aurora, Ohio.

You can contact Chagrin Saddlery by visiting their website at chagrinsaddlery.com.

STEP ONE: In preparation, place your hair in a hairnet in the same style as you wear it at a horse show. Hairnets come in various types and styles. My preference is a hairnet that features the knot in the back as pictured. This type leaves no painful dot on the rider’s forehead and allows for a more comfortable fit. If you try a helmet on with your hair down, it may not fit when you finally wear it up. The length and/or thickness of your hair or the way you place it on the top of your head may change the way the helmet sits. Make sure that your hair lies as flat on your head as possible before you try on the helmet. This will allow the helmet to sit lower, and not “on top” of your head, which is unsafe and incorrect. Once your hair is in place, put the helmet on your head.

The helmet that your friend wears, although fabulous, may not be the best option for you. Even if you love the helmet, certain helmets fit some head shapes better than others. Be open to the helmet that fits the best. There are helmets that fit oval and round heads. An experienced helmet fitter will identify which one is best for you.

*STYLE NOTE: The show ring is not the time to go temporarily from brunette to blond. Hairnets must match the color of the rider’s hair and secure the locks neatly halfway over the rider’s ears.

STEP TWO: Place the helmet on your head with your hair up and check the overall fit. The helmet should feel snug around the entire head with pressure distributed evenly but not uncomfortably. The side of the harness should frame the ears. There should be no gap between the helmet and your head. The helmet should fit snug but not tight. If the helmet squeezes your forehead, it is too round for your head. If the helmet rocks front to back, it is too oval for your head.

*STYLE NOTE: The model is wearing a Samshield Shadowmatt helmet. This conservatively styled helmet is very popular and appropriate for IEA competition. Helmets that are adorned with piping or crystals are better left to the jumper ring and are not appropriate for IEA competition, as they are frowned upon by equitation judges.

STEP THREE: Check the front brim of the helmet. The brim should sit level on your head, covering your forehead. The visor’s brim should be about 1 inch (about the width of two fingers) from your eye. If the brim sits too low, it could obstruct the rider’s view.

*STYLE NOTE: While jewelry can flatter any look, in the show ring, less is more. If you are going to wear earrings, make sure they are simple and classic. Save bold accessories for when you are out celebrating your performance.

STEP FOUR: Adjust the strap. When you have performed all of the steps above and found a helmet that fits perfectly, the next step is to adjust the chin strap. It should fit snugly under your chin and be sized so that one finger can be placed comfortably between your throat and the throat latch. It should not be tight fitting and cause any discomfort. Adjusting the chin strap is the final step to fitting your new helmet. Although this strap will help keep the helmet in place, the other safety checks will make sure the helmet does not move and will keep you safe for years to come.

Once you find the perfect helmet, wear it around the store for at least 10 minutes. If it gives you a headache, it’s too tight. It should become less noticeable and more comfortable as you wear it. Helmets do break in, which is why most have to fit a bit snug when you first buy one.

The perfect helmet does not have to be expensive or fancy. It just has to fit correctly and compliment your look in the show ring. Always seek the help of an experienced helmet fitter to stay safe in the saddle. It may save your life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HELMET SAFETY VISIT RIDERS4HELMETS.COM.
He was powerful. Long legs, strong and slicked with sweat. Short, dark hair; tussled and messily blown to the side. A soft, sloping face that gave off an air of deceptive gentleness was coupled with wide brown eyes that seemed to hold immeasurable amounts of patience and calm. Thick, broad shoulders were lined with muscles that ran all the way down his back in a smooth stream. His stomach was tight and trim; hiding a tremendous strength that she could sense the instant she placed her hand against his skin.

She, however, was his complete opposite. Delicate, thin, flaxen hair, straight and thick, tucked neatly underneath a matte black helmet. Her face was elegantly narrow, with crystal blue eyes that were as sharp as ice, impatient and reckless. Strong, tanned arms were hidden underneath her thick-black show jacket, and a crop twisted in small, gloved hands.

A STORY BY
CAYLIN SPILMAN
To be honest, their partnership could have gone either way. She was used to riding a mare as impulsive and forward as herself, one that surged forward at every fence, ready to fly over the painted rail with ease. Her legs barely even needed to touch the mare’s side before the horse was off like a shot, barely held in check by two strips of trembling leather.

He was used to being ridden firmly, with strong calves pressed against his side at all times and the tail of the reins left to flutter against his neck as he moved. His rider always had a heavy seat pressed into the saddle, and he found comfort in that feeling, the security of knowing exactly where his human was at all times.

At first glance, one would think that the two would not be good for each other. But they would be wrong.

**In the Saddle**

When she first mounted, he thought that she was a child, with her light seat and heavy hand. Uneasy at the change in riders, he tossed his head, attempting to loosen her grip. To his relief, she instantly gave him the rein, her hands practically sliding to the buckle as she pressed her featherlike legs to his side. Hesitantly, he increased his pace, his walk sparking, livening up, and becoming more alert as he walked into the show ring. She tried again, the heels of her shining black boots digging into his chocolate fur. He sighed, and broke into a weak, plodding trot.

After a quick, courtesy circle at the end of the arena, she started to understand that he needed more than what she was giving. Her leg began to press harder against his side as he stepped up into a canter, and she dropped her seat into the saddle, rocking her hips in time with his swaying gait. Her hands loosened, and he dropped his head, grateful for the freedom she was providing him.

However, he wasn't ready for the first fence. She had barely given him enough room to turn, and he caught only a glimpse of the red and gold rails before she was pulling on his mouth, preparing herself for the surge she expected. It never came. He chipped, landed, and snorted, obviously irritated with her interference, and she hastily loosened her grip once more, just as annoyed with herself as he was.

Frowning in concentration, she settled her seat back into the saddle as she pointed him at the four stride line directly ahead of them. She was slowly getting the hang of him now, and, as they approached the first vertical, her hand went forward, her leg dug into his side, and she clucked at him in an attempt to urge him forward. At the feel of her boot against his skin, he picked up his pace, understanding exactly what she wanted from him for the first time since she’d mounted.

**Finally In Sync**

At that moment, when that one second of complete understanding passed between them, they became a team. However, this harmony they had was far from perfect, it was, in reality, quite the opposite. It was impossibly delicate, like the thinnest sheet of ice, and even the smallest movement, if misunderstood, could shatter it. It was a miracle that the partnership that they shared didn’t break, at least not until they were out of the ring and she was sliding off his back, landing in the dirt with a soft thud.

Then, just as quickly as their collaboration had started, it was over. He was led away by a tall, dark-haired trainer in a green windbreaker, and she was called over to a red-headed girl brandishing a video camera and a brilliantly white smile. In a few days, she would go back to riding the flighty mare, and, similarly, he would go back to being ridden by the short, gentle girl he loved. But neither were the same as they were when they had first been put together. For her next two lessons, she would find herself sinking down into the saddle, attempting to move her body in time with her mare’s bumpy canter. Her typically heavy hands would change, starting to work back and forth in a soft game of give and take. Her light leg became more direct, replacing fleeting brushes against chestnut fur with the carefully timed tightening of her calves. Almost subconsciously, she was improving her style, based purely off of what she had learned from riding him.

Similarly, he would find himself responding to less pressure on his sides, ready to start off once he was sure of what his owner was asking of him. His reins no longer flopped uselessly against his neck, but, instead, were held in a way that he could feel the softest amount of pressure from the fingers holding them.

And that was the essence of their brief relationship. Teaching. Learning. Evolving for the better. That’s the essence of every relationship, however small, between a horse and rider. And it’s the meaning of the word equestrian.
At the start of every competition, riders sometimes squeal with delight or cringe inside as they discover their random horse draw. Without question, luck is a factor in the outcome of every class. The pool of horses for each competition is usually a mix of challenging picks; not every draw is ideal. Riders must be able to adapt and make the most of each draw, and judges are expected to evaluate riders with a discerning eye and an appreciation for the random draw format. Coaches, parents, and competitors must also be understanding of the random draw format and be aware of relevant IEA rules. Whether it is a dream ride or one that requires a bit more skill, IEA competitions would not be possible without our noble and hard-working equine partners. Teams willing to work together; generous horse providers; and a grid filled with safe, suitable horses are key to fun and successful competitions. Across the country, in the 56 regions that comprise 10 IEA Zones, there are hundreds of outstanding horses. They spin and slide or jump and swap leads with style. Let’s take a look at just a small sampling of some favorite IEA draws.

**EL CHORRO (CHORRO)**
OWNED BY WALL STREET FARM, WELLINGTON, FLORIDA/IEA ZONE 4
SUBMITTED BY KIMBERLY DEPATIE, IEA PARENT AND HEIDI LENGYEL, WALL STREET FARM COACH

El Chorro is an amazing IEA horse, and he knows it too! Not many horses can be competitive in jumping at an “A” rated show one weekend and then added to the mix in an IEA show the next: Chorro is one of those horses. Through the years, he has participated in 66 IEA shows representing the Wall Street team. Chorro usually competes in the 2'6" and 2'0" classes and is lucky if he is scheduled for only seven classes a day. One of the most consistent horses, he comes out of his stall the exact same horse from day-to-day, which is an important trait in an IEA mount. Chorro is considered a safe and excellent teacher. A timid rider gains a boost of confidence after a solid round on the big chestnut, while a more experienced rider has everything at her disposal needed for intense testing and a shot at winning on a quality equitation horse. After a trip on Chorro, everyone hops down with a huge smile and gives pats of appreciation. Chorro is one of those exceptional IEA horses that everyone hopes to draw.

Chorro’s favorite treats are puffy peppermints and carrot wafers. If you ride at an IEA show in the future, do not forget to pick some up for him. Chorro may even randomly lick you; that’s how he shows appreciation and affection.

**CARRY MY COFFEE (JOE)**
OWNED BY LAST LAP RANCH, MARYVILLE, TENNESSEE/IEA ZONE 4
SUBMITTED BY SANDRA ELDER, LAST LAP COACH

The Last Lap Team from Maryville, Tennessee, is proud to be the first IEA team in the state. Since starting up in 2009, Carry My Coffee (Joe) has been a steady fixture on the Tennessee IEA show scene. A dependable and cooperative American Quarter Horse, Joe has proven to be versatile and indispensable. He will happily cross over to IEA Hunt Seat shows and jump around at 2' and 18" but his forte is Western horsemanship. He is the type of horse that everyone is excited to draw. Happy and kind, Joe is an important part of the team and tireless in his efforts to please. He has carried riders to numerous regional and zone championship placings and titles.

**FOREIGN AFFAIR (DUKE)**
OWNED BY GRIER SCHOOL, TYRON, PENNSYLVANIA/IEA ZONE 2
SUBMITTED BY CHRYSTAL WOOD, RIDING DIRECTOR & GRIER SCHOOL COACH

One of the favorite IEA hunt seat horses at the Grier School is a 17.2-hand warmblood gelding named Foreign Affair, known in the barn as Duke. He was generously donated to the school by Courtney Butz in November 2013. Before coming to Grier, Duke won top ribbons at venues such as Devon, Junior Hunter Finals, and HITS Ocala. In 2013, Duke was even featured on the front cover of the 2014 Devon prize list.

Duke came to Grier on a Friday and was used in an IEA show the very next day! He behaved like a perfect gentleman from the novice through open classes, and everyone raved about how fancy he was. Not only is Duke fancy, but he is very comfortable and fun to ride. After winning an open flat class one lucky competitor said, “That was the best ride of my life! I feel so important riding him.” Emma Krygsman, a student at Grier, says that riding Duke feels like competing at Devon every time she gets on him. By popular demand Duke was invited to the IEA Zone 2 Region 1 finals, as well as the IEA Zone 2 finals. His excellent reputation extends beyond IEA to the...
Inter-School Horse Show (ISHS), where he was used in their National Finals this past May. Duke is an amazing asset to The Grier School riding program as well as the IEA.

PANCAKE
OWNED BY AUTUMN ROSE FARM, PLAIN CITY, OH/IEA ZONE 5

SUBMITTED BY MORGAN KNERR, AUTUMN ROSE TEAM MEMBER & VO REINING & HORSEMANSHIP

Autumn Rose Farm has many great horses, but one of the best is a reining horse named Pancake. A veteran of IEA and IHSA college shows, Pancake competes in both reining and horsemanship classes. She is an awesome horse for everyone from beginner through advanced levels. At the farm she is the first reining horse many ride and she helps them progress through the ranks. She is the go-to horse to teach kids how to set-up leads, the basis for stopping and spinning, and the difference between horsemanship and Reining.

Pancake is a perfect horse for IEA and goes in all shows because she is easy to get along with and does a great job in the ring. Every member of the Autumn Rose team loves the adorable and affectionate Pancake! They appreciate how much she has taught them and admire her for showing them how much fun riding can be.

TOBY
OWNED BY TRACIE FERGUSON & SCOTTSDALE EQUESTRIAN TEAM, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA/IEA ZONE 8

Toby is a 17.3-hand, bay Dutch gelding. He is supplied by the Scottsdale Equestrian Team and owned by Tracey Ferguson, IEA coach for the Front Range Equestrian Team. As a younger horse Toby won the ASPCA Regionals three times and carried numerous riders through the Medal and Maclay Finals.

A favorite draw throughout the regular IEA show season, Toby also earned the distinction of being named Best Horse at Zone 8 Finals! Throughout the day, Toby helped his lucky riders collect tons of ribbons, including blues in the Varsity Open Fences, Varsity Open Flat, and Varsity Intermediate Flat. His Scottsdale Equestrian Team, as well as competitors across Zone 8, consider Toby to be a great ride and a fabulous draw!

Submissions for the next Leg Up column should be sent via email to Susan Wentzel at swentzel13@gmail.com.
STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-12: TAKE THE REINS AND JOIN THE IEA

No Need To Own A Horse!

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– Coach, Chatham, VA

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 and Western disciplines 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! The IEA is available to public or private schools and barn teams. Horses are provided to each rider at every event. All mounts are selected by a draw. Parents like that the IEA provides an affordable format for their child as he/she builds riding skills.

Many of our riders receive scholarships based on their performance throughout their IEA years.

Founded in 2002, the IEA has more than 11,000 members on 1,100 teams competing in hundreds of shows across the United States each year.

For more information, please call Jennifer Eaton, IEA Membership Coordinator, at 877-RIDE-IEA (877-743-3432) or Jenn@rideiea.org.

WWW.RIDEIEA.ORG

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– Parent, Westborough, MA

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