

Maddy Keck

LESSONS LEARNED FROM COLLEGIATE RIDING

I've sat with the idea of writing this newsletter for some time, pondering how I could go about it and speak to you as we all navigate this difficult time involving the coronavirus. I've spent the last 3 years at SCAD (Savannah College of Art & Design) and was going into my senior year as a captain. Excited, ready for competition and leadership, the coming fall and winter quarters were hopeful and full of post-season preparation. As the summer came to a close, things were no longer looking up for the 2020-21 competition season; cases were spiking all over and schools were announcing an online semester/quarter. I was asked to write this from the perspective of a captain on the SCAD Equestrian Team, but the truth is, I have not yet had the opportunity to carry out that role. So instead, I will write to you as a dedicated team member who, like all of us, loves this sport, the horses, the comradery and team environment, and the competition.

Three years ago, I joined the SCAD Equestrian Team. A transfer student from California, I was coming into a totally new environment. I didn't know what to expect. After growing up in the horse world, your "team" is a very small group of supporters, mentors, and your most important partner, your horse. Here, we have about 60 people and an equal amount of horses to call our teammates. Immediately, I knew joining the SCAD team was one of my best decisions. I craved that competitive environment, that thrill of hosting or attending team horse shows, and genuinely wanting each other to succeed, because if they were winning, we all won. A big reason for our success is that we strive to be better, every day. The talent we're surrounded with doesn't intimidate us but pushes us, whether it be in the ring, in team workouts, or in life. Our physical trainer tells us weekly, the reason we're all so good is because we have such talented people around us. Without that, we would all be standing still. Improvement, success, championships; they all happen because of the individuals around us pushing

Being a member of the SCAD Equestrian Team means more than what meets the eye. The hours we put in at the gym, in the ring, in yoga sessions, charity and volunteer events, horse care, studies, and all that goes on behind the scenes has allowed us to do the SCAD name proud. Being a student-artist-athlete is a balancing act and one that isn't done alone. While individual time management is paramount, accountability and support of teammates is what helps keep us on track. We're teammates in competition, but first and foremost, we're teammates in life because success in the ring starts outside of it.

While I'm not able to speak from the point of view I had intended, that's also something I've learned through my time at SCAD; adaptability – on and off horseback. Things are almost never going to go the way you plan; I know that firsthand. 4 years ago, I was planning on being a 2020 graduate living in California. Things change and learning how to be okay with that and know what's right for yourself and others in a particular situation is incredibly valuable. Though our season is still on hold, I look forward to the possibility of returning to competition and what the future holds for myself and the SCAD Equestrian Team. ★★

“I CRAVED THAT COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT, THAT THRILL OF ATTENDING OR HOSTING TEAM SHOWS, AND GENUINELY WANTING EACH OTHER TO SUCCEED...”

