

Monday, January 19, 2009

OU's equestrian team hosts its first competition

By Amanda Benjamin, student writer

During a campus presentation at Oakland Center in 2007, a fire drill forced then-freshman Andrea Zoltek and others to evacuate the building. While waiting outside, she started a conversation with a fellow horse rider. It was only then that Zoltek learned about the Equestrian Club at OU.

"I wanted to ride horses ever since I was little, and my parents caved in when I was 13 and let me take riding lessons," said Zoltek, treasurer of the Equestrian Club. She joined the team in the fall of 2007.

The Equestrian Club started four years ago and the team hosted its first competition Jan. 10-11 at the Detroit Equestrian Club, located at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. "We were really nervous in the morning about how the show was going to go," Zoltek said.

For competitions, riders don't work with horses they're used to riding. Instead, they draw a horse's name from a hat.

"You don't know what horse you're riding until five minutes before," said senior Katie Krauss, who started riding at the age of seven. The riders watch the horses warm up and pick which ones they want or don't want to get.

"The anticipation of finding out which one you're going to ride is exciting," Krauss explained.

During the competition, team members placed well. Krauss won first in the flat glass division, in which horses walk, trot and canter. Judges pick who is best based on posture, or equitation. Stephanie Lyon placed second in the open division, and Christine DuBay came in second and Erica Hayman third in the intermediate division.

During a previous show at the University of Michigan, DuBay, president of the Equestrian Club, received the Reserve High Point Rider honor. DuBay and another rider shared first place in both jumping and flat glass. As a tie-breaker, they had to complete a ride off in flat glass and DuBay ended up second.

There are both team and personal points accumulated throughout the season. To go to regional competitions, a rider needs at least 35 points. From regionals, winning first or second place will send a rider to regional competitions called zones, and the same at zones will lead participation in national competitions. Last year, the team received the Reserve High Point Team and placed fourth in Michigan.

Krauss looks up to their coach, Christopher Ewing. He's done everything and has been everywhere as a rider, she said.

"With Christopher, I really learned how a trainer is supposed to be," Zoltek said. He is there for his riders and builds confidence in them, she added.

This experience has taught Krauss time management skills because she had to balance practice and her university coursework. She said she also has learned sportsmanship and how to be a supportive team player.

The team practices once a week, riding different horses and adapting to different situations.

To join the Equestrian team, experience or owning a horse isn't necessary. Their coach provides training and use of school horses. Those interested in learning more about the team are invited to visit the Equestrian Club Web site at <http://ouet.net/OUET/home.htm>.

Zoltek said the Equestrian Club has been a good way for her to meet and bond with people at OU. She also said she likes the interaction that she has with the horses.

"You control something other than yourself," Zoltek explained.



From left, OU Equestrian Club members Andrea Zoltek, Christine DuBay, Stephanie Lyon, Carolyn Moon and Katie Krauss wait to compete during a recent competition at Western Michigan University.



OU Equestrian Club Secretary Erica Hayman rides during a recent competition at Western Michigan University.

SUMMARY

Enthusiastic student riders are finding success in the saddle while learning sportsmanship, supporting fellow team members and looking to share their passion with both seasoned riders and those new to the sport.

Created by David Groves (groves@oakland.edu) on Monday, January 19, 2009
Modified by Katherine Land - Deleted (land@oakland.edu) on Wednesday, April 8, 2009
Article Start Date: Monday, January 19, 2009