



Lessons Learned From the IHSA

Dear USHJA Members,

Have you ever noticed how much teamwork goes into our riding? We have some “micro” teams composed of our horses, trainers, coaches, veterinarians and farriers. Those teams help us to set and achieve our goals. But, for the most part, we don’t have the “macro” experience of a true team sport. The synergy can make the combined efforts of that team greater than the individuals who participate. A great team is a magical experience.

Our sport is slowly realizing the importance of teams. We have teams at the pinnacle of our sport at the Olympic Games, and we’re developing more team experiences through the USHJA Zone Jumper Championships and the USHJA Children’s and Adult Amateur Hunter Championships. Riding on a team is a game changer. All at once, you realize the importance of the larger picture. It’s no longer you, your horse and your support structure. Now, you have team strategy and a built-in cheering squad. It helps us realize the importance of “one for all, and all for one.”

I believe that the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association has given us a window into the importance of teamwork in our sport. For more than 50 years, the IHSA has given collegiate riders the opportunity to combine riding and teamwork at college. The teams work together to vault themselves to the next level. A Walk-Trot rider is as important as an Open rider. They all strategize and support each other for the greater glory of the team, and that’s an experience that they take forward into their careers.

In my opinion, good teamwork has another positive: It creates leaders. Whether in life or riding, each team must have a leader. At the collegiate level, riders practice their leadership skills as team captains. It’s a positive experience that most likely has an effect on each person as he or she leaves college and enters the workforce.

The IHSA has more than 400 member colleges and universities, with tens of thousands of riders who have competed throughout the 51 years of the association’s existence. Think about that. There are a large number of people from many walks of life who are spreading the ethos of camaraderie, spirit, teamwork and leadership. Success stories abound in this environment.


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TRICIA BOOKER

USHJA President Mary Babick, center, with Adam Edgar of the Savannah College of Art and Design, winner of the Collegiate Cup Open Flat

Two such stories that connect the IHSA to the Olympic Games are those of Beezie Madden and Peter Wylde. Both athletes rode on IHSA teams. Beezie rode for Southern Seminary College in Virginia and was the Cacchione Cup winner in 1984, and Peter rode for Tufts University in Massachusetts and was the Cacchione Cup winner in 1986. Both riders went on to major success. Beezie has won multiple medals at the Olympic Games, both team and individual, and most recently won the Longines FEI World Cup Jumping Final in April. Peter was a team gold medalist at the Athens Olympic Games in 2004. In fact, Beezie and Peter shared that victory along with Chris Kappler and McLain Ward.

In addition to their riding successes, both individuals have taken their team spirit and leadership abilities forward in the form of giving back to our industry. Beezie gives countless hours to governance and also has served as a clinician for the George H. Morris Horsemastership Training Session. She provides inspiration to our up-and-coming athletes. Peter was the lead clinician for the USHJA Emerging Athletes Program for nine years, and through his mentorship, many athletes have been given a leg up in the sport.

Is it a coincidence that the teamwork of the IHSA continues on? I don’t think so. Team spirit, team work and leadership are a vital part of collegiate riding. The USHJA is proud to have the IHSA as a partner and a teammate. And teamwork is the only way that teams really work. Congratulations to all of the IHSA riders!

Mary Babick
USHJA President