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Clemson University

What was your riding experience before joining IHSA?

I began casually riding at the age of 10 and then got more seriously involved as a teen with my first show horse. I grew up mainly riding equitation and hunters with my first two horses on the local circuit in Florida. I was able to become more competitive when I had a unique opportunity to purchase a high junior jumper that was needing a step down, my sophomore year of high school. She was my horse of a lifetime and I was fortunate enough to compete in the High Children's Jumpers at Hits-On-The-Hudson, Fox Lea Farm, and the Winter Equestrian Festival while owning her. I was also Captain of my local Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team throughout High School. We decided to retire my horse with a family friend when I left for college, so I knew I had to find a way to continue riding.



How did you get involved with IHSA?

When looking at colleges, one of the main items on my checklist was a school with a riding program. I really liked the format that IHSA offered since it was very similar to IEA, and the fact that you could be as involved as you had time for was great for an adjusting college freshman. I also had some older friends who competed on IHSA teams for their colleges and they were very complimentary of the program. When I toured Clemson, I met with the riding coach and had a tour of the farm. I immediately felt at home at both Clemson University and their horse farm.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Griffin



Describe your experience competing on the team.

Riding on Clemson's IHSA team was honestly my favorite part about college. I remember being so excited when I made the Hunt Seat competition team as a freshman. I competed in both Over Fences and Flat, and eventually moved up into the Open Division. My senior year I also joined the Western team in the Open Reining and Open Horsemanship divisions. Our western team was amazing and I learned so much from the coach and fellow teammates. Both teams were one big family and no one ever hesitated to offer advice or their gear when someone forgot something or a new rider (ex. me on the western team) had no idea what they were doing. Some of the best memories I have are from traveling to away competitions, going out to regular team dinners, and the lasting friendships that were made. I also served on the Executive Board as Merchandise Chair, Safety Officer, and eventually Vice President. I loved helping to organize the team and getting to know everyone involved.

Tell us about your life now.

After graduating from Clemson University, I pursued a career at the Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) in Mill Spring, NC. One of my IHSA teammates introduced me to the idea and I am now currently in my 3rd year of employment with the company. I am an Event Manager that travels seasonally between TIEC and the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center (PBIEC). It is definitely my dream job. In my free time, I enjoy any and all outdoor activities, spending time with friends, and hanging out with my rescue dog, Harper.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Griffin



What do you think was most valuable about the experience? Do you keep in touch with any of your IHSA teammates/coaches?

I think the most valuable part about my IHSA experience was the discipline that it taught me. I learned so much about where my priorities were and where I wanted them to be in the future. In college you are on your own for the first time and to have a "team" to support you in those years is invaluable. My coaches and teammates were so supportive and wanted to see everyone succeed, not just in the show ring, but also in my life after college. I will never forget all of our conversations about the future during our long bus rides to away competitions. I am still great friends with many of my IHSA teammates as well as the coaches, and still see many of them regularly. The current barn that I ride at is managed by another local IHSA coach so I am still very well connected after graduation.

