

Student Equestrians Ride to IEA National Championships



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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, June 2015 –

One hundred and seventy-seven of the nation's leading middle school and high school equestrians competed at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, June 25-26, 2015. The Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) student-riders competed in the Western discipline during the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Derby. The NRHA and the National Reining Horse Youth Association (NRHyA) are alliance partners of the IEA and sponsored the event. The finalists represented 35 teams from six zones throughout the United States. Individuals and teams participated in multiple competitions during the 2014-2015 regular season shows and zone finals to qualify for the IEA National Finals competition.

Riders competed in reining and horsemanship contests. The IEA format requires that riders compete in unfamiliar tack on unfamiliar mounts; therefore, each rider draws a horse the day of competition and enters the show arena with no opportunity to familiarize themselves with their mount.

In the individual competition Caroline Gute, who rides for the Autumn Rose Equestrians of Plain City, Ohio, was named the IEA Champion Western Rider by accumulating the highest number of points in the Varsity Open Division.

In the fifth annual NRHA High School Reining Championship comprised of the top four youth riders of the IEA and the top four NRHyA riders, the winner was again, Caroline Gute of Autumn Rose Equestrians. IEA rider, Emma Willeke, who rides for KM Equestrian in Findlay, Ohio, took second place.

In the IEA upper school team competition, Dare Equestrian Team of Hilliard, Ohio, earned the Championship title. KM Equestrian of Findlay, Ohio, was the reserve champion team. In the middle school

competition, Central Carolina Equestrian Team of Lucama, North Carolina, received the championship title. KM Equestrian of Findlay, Ohio, finished as the reserve champion.

The IEA holds the trait of good sportsmanship among riders and coaches to the highest regard. IEA rider, Hallie McClintock, of the Dare Equestrian Team from Hilliard, Ohio, was awarded the NRHA Sportsmanship Award for displaying exceptional sportsmanship during the 2015 Western National Finals. The Coach Sportsmanship Award went to Jeff Geiger, who leads Team JGPH of Delaware, Ohio.

The Team Spirit Award was given to the Rocky Mountain Wranglers of Berthoud, Colorado, for their great attitude and participation throughout the Finals event.

Each year the IEA recognizes an exceptional horse that participates in the Finals competition. This year, the 2015 Outstanding Western Horse Award sponsored by NRHA was presented to Tuff donated by West Texas A&M University from Canyon, Texas.

"We are so fortunate to have such talented youngsters in our Association. The Western National Finals was really fun and the competition was spectacular. These kids can really ride. The staff of our alliance partner, the NRHA, was terrific as well. Their assistance and facilities provide an environment that is very special to IEA competitors. As always, our members, parents and coaches are overwhelmingly pleased with the support of the NRHA management and staff. Our gratitude to the owners/trainers that supplied the high-quality horses is unmeasurable," said Roxane Lawrence, IEA co-founder/executive director.

Gary Carpenter, NRHA commissioner, stated, "It was great year to have our friends from the IEA in Oklahoma with us again this year. These young IEA riders are an impressive group of equestrians. It's amazing that these 11-19 year olds are so adept at reining. The NRHA High School Reining Championship featuring the NRHyA top four youth riders versus the IEA top four youth riders has become a part of the Derby that our members look forward to seeing every year. Our organizations complement each other and we look forward to strengthening our alliance to enhance reining across the country."

Founded in 2002, the IEA has more than 11,000 middle and high school student-riders across the United States. The IEA was organized to promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction available to middle and secondary school students and is open to public and private schools and barn teams. Its purpose is to set minimum standards for competition, provide information concerning the creation and development of school associated equestrian sport programs, to generally promote the common interests of safe riding instruction and competition and education on matters related to equestrian competition at the middle and secondary school levels. For more information, please view the IEA website at: www.rideiea.org.