

2013 ANRC National Intercollegiate Championship

McDonogh School's beautiful equestrian facility in Owings Mills, Maryland, was the site for the 36th ANRC National Intercollegiate Equitation Championships, hosted by Goucher College on April 19 – 21, 2013. A record number of 67 riders representing 16 colleges participated.

The ANRC National Championship is a member event of the USHJA Affiliate Equitation Awards Program. The championship showcases the American Forward Riding System and the sporting horse. Judged on equitation, it rewards diversified skills in a four-phase competition. Competitors complete a program ride, an outdoor derby-style course and a USEF Medal-type hunter seat equitation course. They also sit for a written test on riding theory and equine science. Riders ride the same horse throughout the competition, and jumps do not exceed three feet in height. Teams may consist of two or three riders (with the lowest of the three scores dropped in each phase). Individuals may also compete.

Twelve colleges fielded teams or individuals in the Novice Division with fences at 2'6". Previous competitors Centenary College, East Carolina University (ECU), Goucher College, Hood College, The University of the South (Sewanee), Otterbein University, St. Andrews University, Sweet Briar College, and University of Virginia (UVA) were joined by first-time competitors Bridgewater College, California State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), and Towson University. Sweet Briar was the overall Novice team winner over UVA, and Sweet Briar's Kathleen Drake outscored her teammate Brianna Belter by one point for the Novice Individual Championship.

Thirty-seven riders from Bridgewater, Centenary, Fairfield University, ECU, Goucher, Otterbein University, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), St. Andrews, Sweet Briar, Sewanee, UVA, and Virginia Intermont College (VIC) competed on the National level. Centenary bested Sweet Briar by less than one point to garner the National team championship. Centenary College's Kelsey Bernini was the individual National Champion and Sweet Briar's Olivia Smith was reserve.

William Ellis of Ocala FL and Kim Dorfman, Aiken SC, judged the riding phases and Marion Lee, Leesburg VA, judged the written phase. Strett Moore, McDonogh School's head of riding, designed the derby and medal phase courses.

Competition was preceded by two days of schooling, with riders from each college assigned times to practice with their coaches in each of the settings. Schooling began on Thursday, followed by the coaches' meeting and written test Thursday evening. A welcome party for competitors and coaches followed.

Topping the team score for the Novice Division written test phase was Sewanee, followed by Goucher and Otterbein. Otterbein's National Division team bested VIC and Centenary. The written test phase is highly contested, even more so this year when written test scores counted for 5% of the total score. Thirty-two riders scored 90 or above. Blain Lewis was the Novice individual high scorer for Sewanee, and Centenary's Annie Hankins written test score put her at the top of the National division standings.

Friday's Novice Division Program Ride Phase was held in the large and well-lighted indoor arena. The test included two jumps and movements such as counter canter, serpentines, backing, lengthening strides, and turn on the haunches. The competition was preceded by two demonstration rides to familiarize the judges with the test movements and score sheets. Centenary's Cody Wooten was the individual Novice winner with Sweet Briar's Brianna Belter second. Sweet Briar was the winning team over Centenary and UVA.

The National Division program rides got underway on Saturday morning – again preceded by two demonstration rides. National program rides included a second counter canter and more difficult transitions. Centenary's Kathryn Haley was the individual winner (repeating her 2012 win in this phase – an amazing feat given the high level of competition). Caroline Ingalls of SCAD placed second. Centenary's National team bested SCAD in this phase.

After the last program ride on Saturday, coaches were given the opportunity to view their riders' written tests and program ride score sheets. An awards ceremony and reception was then held in the main tent to present the awards for written tests and program rides.

The Novice Division Derby Phase took place on a bright and chilly Sunday morning. The inviting course had a variety of fences scattered over lush green fields. Centenary's Nicole Judd was the Novice Division individual winner by less than half a point over Otterbein's Mattie Boyd and East Carolina's Mary Grace Corr. Centenary secured the team win over Goucher. Following the Derby Phase, Novice riders tackled the challenging Hunter Seat Equitation course. Spreads, combinations, and changes of directions required skill and concentration, and a balanced responsive horse. Sweet Briar's Novice team bested the Otterbein and Goucher teams. Kathleen Drake was the individual medal phase winner over Goucher's Ashley Bent and Otterbein's Sam Psanis.

The Novice Division teams gathered in the outdoor ring before lunch for their final awards. A beautiful perpetual trophy sponsored by USEF was presented to the Novice team champion, Sweet Briar with UVA in reserve. Individual Novice champion Kathleen Drake won over teammate Brianna Belter and Centenary's Nicole Mandracchia.

National riders competed again on Sunday afternoon, starting with the Derby Phase. SCAD's Ryan Genn had the winning round, distinguished by a consistent pace and smooth jumping. Centenary's Kelsey Bernini was second, followed by SCAD's Devon Walther. The winning team was SCAD over Centenary and Sewanee. The Nationals Derby course that followed was made more difficult with additional jumps and more challenging turns. Sweet Briar's Liz Koslow was the winner with an accurate flowing round, followed by Centenary's Kelsey Bernini and Sweet Briar's Olivia Smith.

At the conclusion of the competition on Sunday afternoon, National riders and horses gathered in the outdoor arena for the final awards ceremony. Centenary College won the Betty Belser Memorial Trophy as the National team champion by less than one point over Sweet Briar. Kelsey Bernini received the Jon Conyers Memorial Trophy and the USHJA Affiliate Equitation Award as the overall high point National rider. Olivia Smith was reserve over Kathryn Haley and Sweet Briar's Liz Koslow. Several special USHJA awards were presented. Patte Zumbrun, Meet Director and Head of Riding at Goucher College, was awarded the ANRC nomination for the USHJA Professional Service Award. Tara Clausen received the ANRC nomination for the USHJA Affiliate Riding Instructor Award, and Joseph Fink of Goucher College received the ANRC nomination for the Collegiate Amateur Award, which recognizes both outstanding horsemanship and sportsmanship.

Based on their scores in all four phases of the competition, three riders received Level Three ANRC certification: Centenary's Natasha Klingenstein and Cori Reich, and VIC's Ashley Ramey. Two riders - Kathleen Drake and UVA's Justine Weaver - received Level Two certifications. Seven additional riders earned qualifying scores, but had already been certified in previous competitions or rating centers.