

2014 ANRC National Intercollegiate Championship

The 37th ANRC National Intercollegiate Equitation Championship competition was hosted by Sweet Briar College in Sweet Briar VA on April 25 – 27, 2014. Sixty-seven riders from 14 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 sport horse. Judged on equitation, it rewards diversified skills in a three-phase competition. Competitors complete a program ride, an outdoor derby-style course and a USEF Medal-type hunter seat equitation course. Riders ride the same horse throughout the competition, and jumps do not exceed three feet in height. Riders also take a written test on riding theory and equine science. Teams may consist of two or three riders (with the lowest of the three scores dropped in each phase). Individuals may also compete.

A Novice Division with fences at 2'6" is offered in addition to the 3' National Division. Twelve colleges fielded Novice teams or individuals this year: Averett University, Bridgewater College, Goucher College, Otterbein University, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), St. Andrew's University, Sweet Briar College, Towson University, University of the South (Sewanee), University of Virginia, Virginia Intermont College (VIC), and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Sweet Briar was the overall Novice team winner over SCAD, and SCAD's Lindsay Baker out-scored Sweet Briar's Alexandra Makmann for the individual title.

Riders from Bridgewater College, Centenary, Goucher, Otterbein University, SCAD, St. Andrew's, Sweet Briar, Sewanee, and VIC competed on the National level. Georgia Southern University fielded an individual Nationals rider. SCAD was champion in the National Division over VIC and SBC. SCAD's Ryan Genn was the individual champion, besting teammate Michael Kocher.

Judges for the riding phases of the three-day competition were George Morris, Wellington FL and Kip Rosenthal, Brewster NY. Marion Lee, Leesburg VA, judged the written phase.

Competition was preceded by two days of schooling, with riders from each college assigned practice time with their coaches in each of the settings. Competition began on Friday, with the Novice program rides, followed by the coaches' meeting and written test Friday evening.

The Novice Division Program Ride Phase was held in the large and well-lighted indoor arena, so the riders had minimal exposure to the passing rainstorms that occurred throughout the day. The program ride included two jumps and movements such as counter canter, serpentines, backing, lengthening strides, and turn on the haunches. Madison Albano of SCAD topped teammate Kelly DiFiglia for first place. SCAD was the winning team over Sweet Briar and VIC.

The Novice Division written test was won by Goucher's Anna Carmichael with a perfect 100 over Alexandra Makmann of Sweet Briar who scored 99. Sweet Briar's Olivia Smith scored 100 to win the National Division written test phase in a three-way tie over Goucher's Ashley Bent and Joey Fink. Essay-type tie-breaker questions were used to resolve tied scores.

Topping the team score for the Novice Division written test phase was Sweet Briar with 197 points over Goucher with 196. Goucher's National Division riders upped the ante with a perfect 200 team score over VIC's 197. The written test phase is more highly contested each year, especially now that scores count 5% of the overall score. Thirty-three riders scored 90 or above in the written test this year!

The National riders performed their program rides on Saturday (with a second counter canter and more difficult transitions). Kathryn Haley of Centenary was the individual winner over SCAD's Lydia Todd. SCAD's National team bested Centenary in this phase.

Following completion of the Nationals' program rides, coaches and riders gathered for a reception to award prizes to written test and program ride winners.

Coaches, riders, and spectators watched Novice riders and horses on Sunday morning as they negotiated a sloping course of jumps in the fields for the Novice Derby Phase. VIC's Morgan

Workman was the individual winner over SCAD's Lindsay Baker and Tatum Tatreau. SCAD secured the team win over Sweet Briar. Immediately following the Derby Phase, Novice riders tackled the challenging Hunter Seat Equitation course, designed by Glen Moody. Spreads, combinations, changes of directions, and option fences demanded skill and concentration. Elizabeth Tirado-Perez of VIC won over Goucher's Alison Radgowski and Anna Carmichael. Goucher's Novice team bested the Virginia Tech and Sewanee teams, who were tied for second.

Following lunch, Nationals riders moved to the larger field for their Derby phase. The course sported a bank, a ditch and plenty of galloping room. VIC's Ashleigh Ramey posted the win over Sweet Briar's Olivia Smith and VIC's Rory Mueller. VIC's National team won over Sweet Briar and SCAD. The Medal course which followed was stepped up in difficulty for the Nationals riders, with more difficult turns and additional combinations. SCAD's Michael Kocher was first over Centenary's Andrea Huber and Michael's teammate Ryan Genn.

At the conclusion of the competition, scorekeepers hustled to record and post the final scores, while riders and horses gathered in the outdoor ring for the final awards ceremony. A beautiful perpetual trophy sponsored by USEF was presented to the Novice team champion, Sweet Briar College. SCAD was reserve, followed by Virginia Tech and Sewanee. Lindsay Baker was the Novice Individual Overall Champion followed by Andrea Makmann and Anna Carmichael. SCAD won the Betty Belser Memorial Trophy as the National team champion, with VIC reserve, Sweet Briar third, and Centenary fourth. Ryan Genn received the Jon Conyers Memorial Trophy and the USHJA Affiliate Equitation Award as the overall high point National rider. Michael Kocher was second over Centenary's Andrea Huber and Sweet Briar's Olivia Smith. Several special USHJA awards were presented. Susan Sjolund, who has officiated as a steward at numerous Nationals competitions, was awarded the ANRC nomination for the USHJA Professional Service Award. Jen Bunty, Goucher head of riding and team coach, received the ANRC nomination for the USHJA Affiliate Riding Instructor Award, and VIC's Blake Roberts received the ANRC nomination for the Collegiate Amateur Award, which is given to someone who best represents the spirit of intercollegiate competition and embodies outstanding horsemanship and sportsmanship. Blake was instrumental in raising the funds that enabled the VIC to attend this year's ANRC Nationals.

Nine Nationals riders qualified for Level Three ANRC certification, based on their scores in all four phases of the competition (80% or above on the written test and 70% or above on each of the riding phases).

Following the competition many riders, coaches, Sweet Briar alumnae, students, and friends, as well as several prospective students and their parents, attended a special dinner and lecture by George Morris at Sweet Briar's Elston Inn Conference Center. The event was organized by the Sweet Briar College Alumnae Association. Mr. Morris, who is well-known as a USEF Official and former Chef d'Equipe for the US Equestrian Team, complemented Sweet Briar on its magnificent facility and the high level of competing riders and horses. He was particularly impressed by the Derby courses and said that competitions should incorporate more similar courses with natural obstacles in open fields.