

USHJA

IN STRIDE

The Official Magazine of the United States Hunter Jumper Association

**Collegiate
Riding Opportunities**

**Centenary's IHSA
Nationals Sweep**

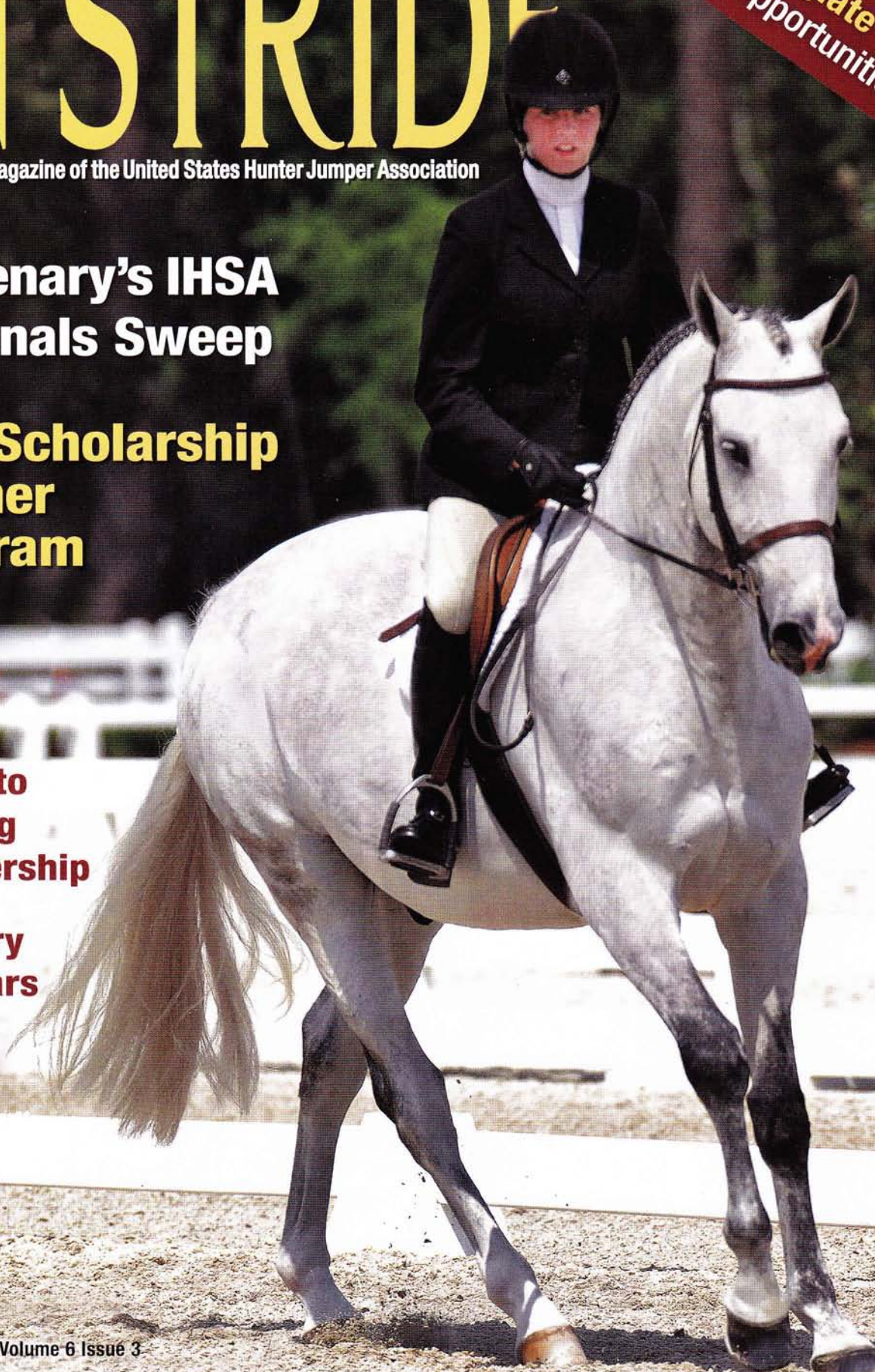
**New Scholarship
Partner
Program**

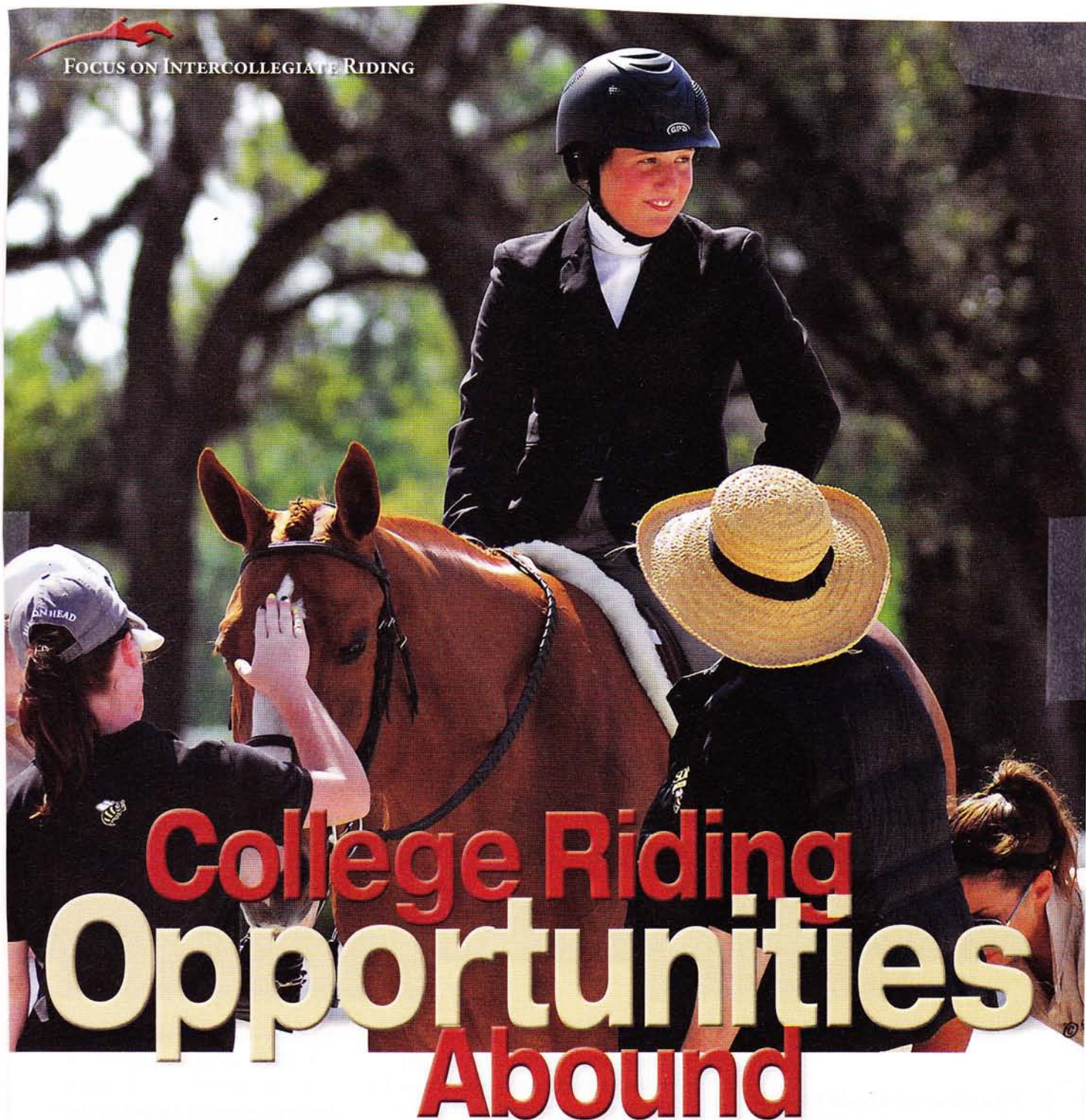
Plus:

- **Keys to
Strong
Leadership**
- **Gallery
of Stars**

JUNE 2011

Volume 6 Issue 3





College Riding Opportunities Abound

BY ANNE LANG

Today's students have more and better opportunities to combine academics with their passion for horses.

For the high-school equestrian who hopes to ride for a team while in college, today's options are more plentiful than ever. There are numerous organizations that offer competitive opportunities ranging from beginner Walk-Trot to the open level of 3'6" fences. In addition, a wide range of scholarships are available

(though not always guaranteed).

Most *In Stride* readers are familiar with the primary organizations that include hunter-seat riding in their formats: The Intercollegiate Horse Show Association; the American National Riding Commission; and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, most commonly referred to as Varsity Eques-

FLASHPOINT



IHSA



VARSITY EQUESTRIAN

TRICIA BOOKER

Photos from left to right: The IHSA offers students of all abilities the opportunity to ride and compete, while the Varsity Equestrian program focuses on the top-level 3'6" equitation riders. The ANRC features a championship format that allows students to compete in written, dressage sportif, hunter trials and stadium phases.

trian. All three entities are undergoing changes and developments to further enhance their programs—resulting in the best possible opportunities for college applicants. The most challenging aspect for incoming students is having to make a choice!

Something for Everyone

Launched in 1967, the IHSA has evolved to include 380 member colleges and 8,800 individual members across the United States and Canada (see p. 47). The purpose of the IHSA, according to its leaders, is to promote competitions

for riders of all skill levels, who compete individually and as teams at regional, zone and national levels. The association was founded on the principal that any college student should be able to participate in horse shows, regardless of his or her financial status or riding level.

Eliminating the expense of shipping or even owning horses puts IHSA competitions within reach of many who would otherwise miss the equestrian experience.

The IHSA's most significant recent change has involved a reduction from nine zones to eight, resulting in some

WILLGOMEZPHOTOS.COM



ANRC

How They Work

IHSA competition format: Students ride horses that are furnished by the host college and chosen by drawing lots. The use of personal tack is not allowed, and schooling of horses is not permitted.

Classes range from Walk-Trot for first-year students to the Open division for more experienced riders. Riders qualify for the IHSA regional championships by earning points at local shows throughout the year. The top three riders in each class of the Regional Finals advance to Zone Finals, and the top two riders in each class at Zone Finals qualify to compete at Nationals.

Regional high-point riders become eligible for the National Individual Championship (USEF Cacchione Cup). Each region's high-point team competes head-to-head with other high-point teams from the region to earn the right to compete for its zone at Nationals.

ANRC competition format: Equitrials and collegiate invitationals take place throughout the year, with teams providing their own horses. The ANRC National Intercollegiate Riding Championships are held annually. Teams from each school compete either at the Novice division (2'6") level or National division (3'). Individual riders may compete as well.

NCAA competition format: Four or five riders compete in one of four separate disciplines (fences ranging from 3' to 3'6;" also flat, reining and horsemanship) at every competition.

On the eve or morning of the competition, coaches draw horses and riders for their teams. Each team member competes on the same horse as her opposing team member (head-to-head), and the rider with the higher score receives the point for the team. The four divisions are added together for the final score. In the event of a tie, officials go to raw scores, drop the lowest score on each side, and then add up the total to see which team had the most overall points.

IEA competition format: The host team provides horse and tack, and riders draw for horses at the show. Flat-class riders have no opportunity to warm up their horses. Jumping-class riders have a short time to warm up their horses. There are numerous flat classes and six jumping classes offered. The most advanced jumping class does not exceed 3'.

schools now competing against new rivals, and compressing total entries for the IHSA Nationals from approximately 450 riders to 400-420.

Xavier University (Ohio) coach and IHSA National Secretary Jim Arrigon serves on the IHSA Realignment Committee that's been working on zone restructuring for the past five years. Arrigon recently released an outline of the committee's goals.

They include providing a fairer route to IHSA Nationals for riders and teams by balancing enrollment; easing pressure on over-crowded areas in Zones 1, 2 and

3; easing pressure on the Nationals Horse Committee by requiring fewer horses at the championships; addressing the void left in the old Zone 7 when several teams left the IHSA for the NCAA; reducing the size of regions to create more riding opportunities for members and to allow for future growth, particularly in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions; and shifting membership to create more balanced zones.

"The result of the committee's diligence," said Rutgers University coach and Zone 3 chairman Kelly Francfort,

"is that IHSA has created six new regions to allow for future growth in over-populated areas and has increased the showing opportunities for members. No longer are there zones with more than 1,000 members. This alone, without taking further action, helps reduce the size of the Nationals and allows us to present a more equitable and manageable championship."

IHSA Executive Director Bob Cacchione is pleased with the changes.

"Right now, the IHSA is stronger, bigger and better than ever," Cacchione said, "and it keeps growing. That's

A Proven Training Ground

Comprised of more than 5,000 riders in middle and high school, the Interscholastic Equestrian Association was created in 2002 and provides a fitting springboard for equestrians seeking to eventually compete at the college level. There are 510 IEA teams in 31 states.

The IEA was established to promote and improve the quality of equestrian competition and instruction [for pre-college students]. Its purpose is to set minimum standards for competition; provide information on the creation and development of school-associated equestrian sports programs; to generally promote the common interests of safe riding instruction and competition; and [to provide] education on matters related to equestrian competition at the middle and secondary school levels.

Representatives from numerous colleges with equestrian programs attend the annual IEA Nationals, where several days are devoted to forums for learning more about intercollegiate team options.

IEA Executive Director Roxane Lawrence said that the IEA recorded a growth spurt of 30 percent in 2010-11. She said the IEA board is currently in the process of analyzing rule changes and updates for the coming year.

Already in place, Lawrence said, is the new IEA National Sportsmanship Award; \$5,000 in scholarships added to the 2011 Nationals; and more than \$3,500 in scholarships handed out at the zone levels for a total of approximately \$25,000 in scholarships awarded this year.

"Upcoming changes to the membership process include additional staffing and electronic membership applications for 2011-12," said Lawrence. "Also, new computer programs will be available for all shows to process entries, create programs and electronically submit results. And we have a new website under construction, to be unveiled in early summer."

DID YOU KNOW?

The Intercollegiate Horse Show Association's Cacchione Cup winner receives an automatic berth in a United States Hunter Jumper Association Emerging Athletes Level I Training session or a complimentary registration at a USHJA Trainers Symposium. And beginning in 2012, the ANRC Individual Overall Champion will receive the same award.



RON SCHWANE

Ariana Mato, of the Blue Water Equestrian Team (Florida), was the leading hunt seat rider at the 2011 Interscholastic Equestrian Association Nationals, held April 28-May 3 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

largely due to the IHSA board of directors and the coaches out there who do an incredible job, not only with their teams and their regions, but also in the zones as well.

"As for how we're going to grow and expand," Cacchione continued, "I think the partnerships that have been created and developed—with the United States Hunter Jumper Association, the United States Equestrian Federation, the American Quarter Horse Association and the National Reining Horse Association—are beyond mere sponsorships. They each have programs available for today's young riders, which expands the IHSA rider's potential exposure and involvement, other than just opportunities for riding in the ring."

Forward Seat, Forward Thinking

The ANRC is in place at 27 colleges and universities, many of which also compete in the IHSA. As the organization's documented history states: "In 2006, the ANRC was established to continue the goals and activities of the Affiliated National Riding Commission, which was part of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance for more than 60 years."

The mission of the ANRC was to initiate a standardized method to educate riders in hunt seat equitation and to create a rider-certification system to assess riding ability and knowledge of riding theory.

"That mission," states the ANRC, "is supported by ANRC-sponsored competitions, clinics, forums, symposiums, rider certification centers and an apprentice judging program; distribution of educational materials; and promotion of the highest quality of educated riding and related services within schools, colleges and universities. Competitive riding events include equitrials [hunter competitions] and collegiate invitationals designed to improve hunter performance and equitation skills. The goal of the ANRC is to provide a contemporary, systematic

approach to riding, training and teaching that's appropriate for horses as well as riders at various stages of learning."

Changes are afoot in the ANRC. As ANRC Chairman Patte Zumbrun of Goucher College (Maryland) said, "The ANRC is committed to offering programs that support the educational goals of the USHJA and promote the American Forward Riding System."

Launching in 2012, the USHJA/ANRC Horsemanship Program will initiate a new competitive format as part of the USHJA Outreach Program. The new format will appeal to a broad base of amateurs and professionals in the industry who aspire to improve their riding, teaching and training skills.

"Based on the ANRC National Collegiate Equitation Championship competition," Zumbrun continued, "participants will have an opportunity to be judged in two, three or four phases: a program ride, judged and scored on each movement; a derby-style course of natural fences in a ring or field; a medal course in a ring; and a written test based on assigned sections of the *USHJA Trainer Certification Program Manual*. Riders can compete individually or as a team, receiving a written evaluation of their performance and feedback from the judge."

Another change was already installed this year. "The 34th ANRC National Collegiate Equitation Championship (see p. 24), hosted by the Savannah College of Art and Design (Georgia), started a new novice division at 2'6" along with the national 3' division," said Zumbrun. "The goal was to introduce new colleges to the competition at an introductory level to increase future participation. Centenary College [New Jersey] will be hosting the championship in 2012 and will offer the same."

Anticipating Growth

In 1998, the NCAA approved the classification of equestrian as an "emerging sport." This move opened the door for colleges and universities to add women-only varsity teams to their offerings, providing a welcome new avenue for compliance with Title IX requirements. Varsity

Equestrian will achieve full NCAA championship status when 40 or more colleges are sponsoring equestrian teams. (Currently there are 23.)

"I think Varsity Equestrian is at a very exciting point right now," said University of Georgia head coach Meghan Boenig. "We're seeing schools that are interested in adding equestrian, some of which joined us at our semi-annual meeting [May 18-19 in New Orleans]. So we're very involved in the promotion of where our sport is going, on many campuses. We believe the future is bright."

Varsity Equestrian spokesman and Oklahoma State University head coach Larry Sanchez agreed.

"I believe that our 2011 National Championship was the best one to date," Sanchez said. "It gets better and better every year. As far as getting Varsity Equestrian to the championship level, I'm very hopeful that with the economy starting to recover, schools are beginning to look at adding new sports again. We've seen interest and growth with all emerging sports in the NCAA."

"Also," Sanchez added, "the current [White House] administration has instigated a renewed review of Title IX situations at institutions of higher education, so that's caused us to receive a lot of phone calls from schools interested in adding equestrian as a varsity sport. Our job is to get information and materials to athletic directors from those schools. I'm excited about the potential growth for our sport, which seems to be taking off again."

The organizations profiled in this feature can be accessed via the following websites:

IHSA

www.ihsainc.com

ANRC

www.anrc.org

NCAA/Varsity Equestrian

www.varsityequestrian.com

IEA

www.rideiea.org

Auburn University Tigers Roar at VENC

Proving that its No. 1 seed position going into the Varsity Equestrian National Championships wasn't a fluke, the hunter-seat team of Auburn University—fortified by its 15-1 record for the season—claimed the VENC winner's trophy after a hard-fought battle with No. 2 seed University of Georgia.

The combined performances of AU's hunter-seat riders and its Western team also earned AU the overall title for this year's VENC, which took place on April 14-16 in Waco, Texas.

"It's always a gamble when you're seeded in the top four and get a bye on the first day," said AU Associate Head Coach Lindsay Neubarth. "Because your riders have a whole day where they're not competing, they just sit and watch. So to me, that creates a challenge for the riders to stay fresh and focused, and not to underestimate opponents who are coming off a win.

"We brought 14 horses here," Neubarth

added, "so we were balancing making sure they were prepped and ready with staying focused on doing what we came here to do."

Since the first VENC in 2002, AU had won the hunter-seat title just one time (in 2008), while UGA had pulled off that feat five times, including the past two years. UGA also had won the overall VENC title the past two years, and a total of five times. This year, UGA settled for the reserve championship in both hunter seat and overall.

Reflecting on the most challenging elements of the week in the fences phase, Neubarth remarked: "I would say those were in the semi-finals. The course was pretty technical, the jumps were a little higher and it was later in the day. We ended up sweeping that round [against Oklahoma State University], so that was good. But it was tricky at first."

The flat phases also presented difficult moments, according to Neubarth. "The

movements were pretty technical," she observed. "You had to be very specific about how you were going to handle them, and that's always a challenge on an unfamiliar horse. It's also a challenge to be able to flow and be fluid, to execute them correctly while looking good, and appearing like it's easy on a horse you've never sat on that may in fact not even be easy at all."

AU junior Maggie McAlary, 21, Amherst, New Hampshire, was named MVP on the flat by the two hunter-seat VENC judges. The award was based on her cumulative performances during the three-day period, in which she scored the highest flat round of the week (a total of 187 points). But McAlary wasn't without butterflies during the championship flat test.

"I felt the most challenging part was lengthening down the long side with the 10-meter circle in the middle," McAlary said, "then lengthening again—because you had



WILLIEGOMEZPHOTOS.COM

to have a really good feel of the horse, and in order to execute that test correctly, you had to be both bold and very accurate. And with the huge crowd and all the cheering going on, it's a lot for one horse to take in."

McAlary said it was the support of her teammates that pulled her through, however. "We're all rooting for each other and behind each other 100 percent," she said. "And we're all really good at making each other laugh and trying to build each other's confidence."

McAlary's teammate Grace Socha, 21, was named MVP over fences. Socha, a junior from Glenville, New York, echoed McAlary's sentiments on team unity.

"This is the strongest team I've ever been around," Socha said. "The unconditional love and support were what helped us win a national championship. This team is like a family, and we have a bond that brings out the best in everyone."

—Anne Lang

"We all pulled together for this win, and all the hard work we put in throughout the season paid off, big time," said Auburn's Grace Socha, the MVP over fences.