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Mastering the Horsemanship Quiz Challenge

The USHJA Horsemanship Quiz Challenge (HQC), presented by Sweet Briar College, is designed to educate and recognize young equestrians who have exceptional horsemanship knowledge. These four participants share their insights into the program and their passion for horsemanship knowledge.

 **ELIZABETH EVANS**
HOMETOWN: Los Angeles, California
PRIMARY DISCIPLINE: Jumper
OUT OF THE SADDLE: Assistant trainer at family's Mischief Farm



Elizabeth Evans graduated from high school in 2010 and took a year off. "As is usually the case with taking a year off, I ended up not going to college. I had been working as assistant trainer at Mischief Farm all through high school (it's my family's training business) and then became full-time once I graduated," said Evans.

Admittedly, many youngsters who've grown up in the barn do sometimes believe there's little for them to learn when it comes to horsemanship, given their experiences, but this California farm girl entered the Horsemanship Quiz Challenge program with a different attitude.

"Actually, I expected to learn a lot from the program. Between the study guide, the lectures at finals and learning from some of the best professionals in the business, Horsemanship Quiz Challenge was an absolute knowledge-fest. It was a great excuse to revisit the basic information that's sometimes forgotten or lost along the way," Evans said.

She scored in the top percentile of both her Level One and Two quizzes, then with Zone 10 teammates Mary Anastasi and Devyn Hinkle she headed to the inaugural HQC Finals, which was held in conjunction with the Emerging Athletes Program National Training Session last November at Fields and Fences in Gurnee, Illinois. Evans and her team overtook 25 other competitors in the Zone team rivalry and clinched second place.


"Trying to remember all the specific facts that I read was probably the hardest thing for me," Evans said with a laugh. "I always had a hard time remembering material and statistics for school. It helped that the information was all about horses; it made the experience a lot more fun, and I really wanted to remember the facts."

And that feature is one of the consistent compliments the HQC program receives: how the materials provide an ongoing benefit for participants and incentive to learn.

"I picked up a lot of tips and tricks at finals that I was able to bring home and use with my horses," said Evans. "I also enjoyed reading the anatomy and physiology part of the study guide and then going out to the barn and seeing it come to life. All the facts that I've read have been great to have at my fingertips in my everyday barn life."

While the knowledge gained was its own reward, for Evans there was an added personal benefit.

"I take pride in the fact that I put horses first, and horsemanship is very important to me; so it was great to meet other people who feel exactly the same way," she said. "I really enjoyed getting to know more professionals in the horse industry and learning from their wisdom. It was also a great opportunity to meet a lot of people you read about in the USHJA updates. The whole experience was great, and I can't wait to do it again!"

 **STEPHANIE WHITWORTH**
HOMETOWN: San Jose, California
SCHOOL: Branham High School
PRIMARY DISCIPLINE: Jumper



One could say that high school senior Stephanie Whitworth was practically born in a barn. Her mom is a trainer, so horses are in her bloodline. Like most horse-obsessed girls, Whitworth said joining the HQC was a no-brainer. "It was so good for my horsemanship to go over all of the topics in the study guide," she said.

Though Whitworth freely admitted to being surprised by how much knowledge her subconscious absorbed from hanging out in barns, she wouldn't say the HQC program was a walk in the park, either.

"The written test was definitely the most challenging. Some of the anatomy and nutrition questions were especially hard to remember, and some of the things not applicable to my area were new information that I needed to learn and ingrain into my head," Whitworth said.

She conquered all of the challenges and earned an invitation to the HQC Finals as an individual finalist and placed third overall. The national finals offered a new level of interactive study and opportunities via world-class speakers and hands-on practicums that thoroughly tested participants.

"Every day I use different tools and knowledge, without even thinking about it. Like putting on a halter takes specific techniques to ensure maximum safety," said Whitworth. "I learned a lot about the mental aspect of riding during the practicums, and I've definitely used some of the techniques that [clinician] Kip Rosenthal talked to all of us about."

For many in the program, one of the great benefits was (and is) having unlimited access to some of the most respected professionals in the equestrian world.

"Speaking to [clinician] Karen Golding with some specific questions was very educational, and I've been able to put some of that knowledge into use and look forward to putting more of it into use in the future," she added.

Whitworth said she wouldn't trade a moment of her HQC