EQUESTRIAN SPORTS: UCONN STYLE

by: Tara Lynch

For years now, equestrian sports at UConn have been pretty secluded to only those traveling down to Horsebarn Hill. Not widely publicized, the Equestrian Team (UCET) instills competitiveness, commitment and confidence in all 30 of its riders and encourages personal achievement in lessons and horse shows. The team is made up of both inexperienced and advanced riders, ranging from freshmen to alumni.

Unknown to much of the student body, UConn houses approximately eighty horses; twenty-five of which have been donated to the school for the use of not just UCET but the polo, dressage and drill teams as well. With the use of these horses, riders are able to learn from as well as teach the horses that many times are welcomed into the UConn riding program as babies. Riders learn patience and acceptance of new challenges when guiding their horses around courses of eight or more fences or simply during a light “hack” consisting of walking, trotting and cantering around the ring.

Students on the Equestrian Team are full-time students juggling studies with taking care of horses and making sure that they are on time for lessons and horse shows. Throughout the semester UCET travels to more than five away shows ranging in locations anywhere from Rhode Island to Massachusetts and this year, the team’s national competition will be held in Burbank, California. Along with the traveling, UCET also hosts one home show a semester in which all riders are encouraged to clean jumps, groom and tidy up horses, hire judges and food trucks, decorate the indoor arenas and lounge and also to make sure all 11 competing colleges are checked-in the day of and are ready to mount their assigned horses on time.

Every horse show, riders ride for ribbons that hold a place value. Points add up and the higher the point value the farther a rider can advance. Riders have the ability to qualify for regionals, zones, and/or nationals depending on their final point totals. So far, 14 of UConn’s own have qualified for the advance to regionals. The rest of the team looks towards Spring semester’s final 4 shows to advance. The competitive nature of this sport encourages riders to cheer on their own team-mates as well as friendly opponents.

UCET is a very dedicated team that enables riders of all levels to compete and have fun all under the same roof. In 1998, 2005 and most recently in 2006, UConn held the region’s title for highest point accumulations against colleges such as URI, Johnson & Wales, Wesleyan, Connecticut College and UConn’s most competitive rival: Brown.

In the beginning of this Spring semester UConn trails Brown by 21 points. Come see the UConn Equestrian Team on February 16th, 2008 at the arena on Horse Barn Hill and cheer on the Huskies as we take on Brown University. Meet the team and it’s new coach Elizabeth Rademacher as well as all of our horses. It’s guaranteed to be a fun and exciting day!

Riders to watch for at the UConn Home Show:

#    Rider
    Ackel, Elizabeth
18    Antenucci, Leanna
65    Argrelles, Isabel

13    Bartscht, Chelsea
190  Bushey, Katie
141  Callahan, Anne Marie
166  Cassavant, Julia
117  Caswell, Heather
     Dechance, Lisa
120  Edwards, Kristen
178  Einkauf, Ellen
147  Gloeckner, Samantha
217  Guildea, Julia
 84   Kriwitsky, Amy
121  Lewis, Caitlin
 22  Lynch, Tara
251  Manning, Asia
 74  Massari, Kelly
134  Morris, Amanda
196  Morse, Samantha
135  Murray, Kaitlyn
127  Nestor, Rachael
156  O’Toole, Robyn
 61  Philbrook, Katie
256  Sarubbi, Lisa
 30  Withee, Lara