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UNH Media Relations

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Recommended Citation

Potier, Beth, "UNH Horse Trials Mark 40th Anniversary Oct. 1-2" (2011). *UNH Today*. 3765.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/3765>

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Media Relations

UNH Horse Trials Mark 40th Anniversary Oct. 1-2

September 8, 2011



DURHAM, N.H. – The equine program at the University of New Hampshire will host its 40th annual United States Eventing Association Horse Trials fall event in Durham October 1-2, 2011. The trials, which feature more than 200 participants from across the Northeast, are almost entirely student-run and are open to the public.

Eventing is an Olympic sport, often described as the equestrian triathlon. Each horse-and-rider team must complete a dressage test, showcasing the horse's gymnastic ability and obedience; a cross-country test designed to test the endurance, bravery and skill of both horse and rider over a course of solid obstacles; and a show jumping test, in which the team must perform over fences which will fall down if not ridden accurately. UNH's event provides national-level competition for local riders.

The cross country phase of an event tests the bravery, stamina and skill of horse and rider. The UNH equine program will host its 40th annual United States Eventing Association Horse Trials fall event in October 1-2, 2011.

Student involvement makes the UNH horse trials unique, says event organizer Christina Keim, who is a lecturer in the department of biological sciences at UNH. Students are involved in nearly every aspect of the show, from facility

preparations like painting jumps and setting up courses and dressage rings to actually staffing the event itself. When the event began at UNH in the early 1970s, she says, "students were responsible not just for the design of fences, but for their construction, all under the guidance of organizer Janet Briggs. Faculty and students had to really collaborate in order to get these events started."


"For many of our students, this is not just their first exposure to eventing, it is their first opportunity to really learn how much work goes into producing a horse show," says Elizabeth Oertel, show secretary. "This experience gives them the chance to develop skills related to event planning in general, but also transferrable skills in areas such as leadership, teamwork, personnel management and logistical coordination."


The UNH Horse Trials has seen many changes during its forty years of existence. At one time, the dressage phase was held off-site; today, the facility boasts the capacity to host four dressage arenas and two warm-ups. The show jumping phase formerly was held across the street from the main facility, requiring that horses and riders have police escort to get to the ring. Today, the show jumping is held in an arena which doubles as a dirt parking lot for commuter students when events are not in session.


This fall's event will feature competition at the beginner-novice, novice, training, preliminary-training and preliminary levels as well as several special events to help celebrate this important milestone. Richard Jeffrey, acclaimed International Equestrian Federation (FEI) course designer, will conduct a show jump course design seminar on Friday, Sept. 30. Participants will work with Jeffrey to design and then build the course for the fall event.


In addition, the UNH Fall Horse Trials will host the Area I Adult Team Championships for the first time. A retrospective photo display and booklet will celebrate the history of the event.

"We hope that our competitors and spectators will help us to celebrate UNH as one of the longest running horse trials in the United States," says Keim. "With their support, we are looking forward to another forty years of eventing here in Durham."


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For more information about the UNH Equine Program and its horse trials, go to www.equine.unh.edu.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

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Photograph available to download: http://www.unh.edu/news/cj_nr/2011/sep/bp08horse.jpg

Caption: The cross country phase of an event tests the bravery, stamina and skill of horse and rider. The UNH equine program will host its 40th annual United States Eventing Association Horse Trials fall event in October 1-2, 2011.

Credit: ©Hoof Pix® Sport Horse Photography, LLC

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