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QMS SECURES CANADA'S FIRST IEA REGIONAL BERTHS

Equestrian Athletes Making an Impression South of the Border

January 24, 2024 – Duncan, BC, Canada – The QMS Equestrian Team has jumped into the American IEA show circuit this year with phenomenal success. The QMS Hunt Seat Varsity team and five individual riders have qualified for the IEA Regional and Zone 9 Finals in their inaugural competition year, setting these trailblazing riders on an exciting path.

The [Interscholastic Equestrian Association \(IEA\)](#) Hunt Seat riding format allows riders of all levels to compete throughout the United States, with the students from QMS competing as the only Canadian team this year. IEA focuses on fun, sportsmanship and equitation – judges assess a rider's position and their ability to clearly communicate with the horse for their overall performance. The most challenging part of the IEA format is that each athlete rides an unknown mount as horses are assigned through a draw-based format.

“The host facilities are responsible for providing horses to competitors, creating an unknown variable that challenges our athletes to focus on their form, horsemanship and reliance on their equitation skills,” shares Angie Dobbie, Director of Equestrian at QMS. “While the format provides unknowns, the supportive team environment ensures riders remain positive, flexible and open to adjusting their riding style based on the horse they ride. It has been hugely popular with our athletes and I'm extremely proud of everything they've achieved so far.”

After a beta testing year in 2022–2023, where School riders learned the rules at workshops and practice shows run in IEA format, it became clear that there was an appetite for IEA. “Our original plan was to attend a single 2-day show this season so our riders could measure their skills against this unfamiliar format,” explains Coach, Indiana Wynne-Smith. “Our first show in Blaine, WA was so successful and popular with our students that our team doubled in size within a week and more competitions were added to the calendar. The excitement was contagious! The kids loved the team camaraderie aspect of the shows and working with horses they have never ridden before.”

“The IEA format also provides competition opportunities to riders who may not have the financial means to compete at established Hunter/Jumper shows in Canada or the US,” she adds. “So, these talented athletes not only get to improve their riding skills, they can travel and meet horses and riders from across the US for a fraction of the cost. These shows are really fun and positive.”

Now, after only three shows, five QMS riders have qualified for individual competition at the IEA Regionals in Tenino, WA taking place on February 10. Athletes competing as individuals at the Varsity-level (Grades 9–12)

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will be Halle Plester, and Poppy Garrad-Cole, while Julianna Wynne-Smith, Emily Eframsson and Adele Bartfai will be competing as individuals at the Futures-level (Grades 4–8).

In addition to these individual accomplishments, the QMS Varsity team’s strong results, including first place finishes at two separate shows, has earned them a slot at the Zone 9 Finals in Sherwood, OR on March 10–11. Their achievement is a Canadian first. The Varsity team will include Maggy Buttner-Danyliw, Hannah Blair-Smith, Poppy Garrad-Cole, Halle Plester, Rowan Picard and Hannah Shaw. A first-place win in any of the individual classes or combined team placing at the Zone 9 finals would secure QMS riders a berth at the IEA Nationals in Tyron, NC later this spring.

“This whole initiative ticks all the boxes in terms of what we aspire for our young athletes to experience,” outlines David Robertson, Head of School. “And the results are outstanding!”

Queen Margaret’s School will be hosting a Burger and Beer fundraiser for the IEA team at Bridgeman’s Bistro in Mill Bay on Wednesday, March 6 at 5:30pm. Everyone is welcome! Tickets can be purchased [online](#).

Photo 1: The QMS IEA Hunt Seat Team was excited to take part in their very first show at Burkwood Farm in Blaine, WA in November, earning podium placements in both individual and team events.

Photos 2-3: In Lake Oswego, OR, QMS riders Halle Plester (Varsity) and Julianna Wynne-Smith (Futures) became the first Canadian riders to officially qualify for the IEA Regionals.



About Queen Margaret's School

QMS is a university-preparatory, all gender day and boarding school located in Duncan, BC. Our purpose is to prepare young trailblazers, as no two journeys are the same. With an educational emphasis on experiential learning, innovative thinking, environmental stewardship and sustainability, we live by the value statement: *Be curious. Be kind. Be brave. Be you.*

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