

Medal/Equitation Riders by Janet Salem as published in *The Chronicle of the Horse* "Between Rounds"

Medal Riders are the crème of the crop.

Medal Riders aren't just Equestrians- they are Equestrian Athletes.

And they act like any Athlete.

If any of you hope to be a Medal Rider or to earn a college scholarship, you need to start thinking like an athlete:

What is an Equestrian Athlete?

She works hard without complaint- because she wants to be THE BEST.

She is strong and fit. She doesn't just ride. She runs, bikes, swims. Riding or showing one horse per day is nothing to an athlete. One horse a day is easy.

She rides anything she can throw a leg over for the experience. She tries to figure it out and make it better- and she is grateful for the opportunity. The tougher the better. She looks at difficulties as challenges and tackles them head-on. If she falls off, she climbs back on and tries again.

She doesn't make EXCUSES. She doesn't blame the horse for her own shortcomings.

She has the DISCIPLINE to work on her weak points even if it's not fun. She works without being "made to" in a formal lesson or without being nagged or reminded by a parent. She uses her lesson times to learn new things.

She makes PROGRESS because she works and practices and is motivated to GET BETTER.

She makes progress because as she learns a new skill or new idea, she practices it until she perfects it and then she learns a new one. That is progress. She doesn't waste time repeating the same mistakes over and over.

She doesn't let negative ATTITUDE hold her back. Negative attitude impedes progress. She turns frustration into FOCUS.

She appreciates the commitment and devotion of her coach and her parents and she is GRATEFUL for their help because SHE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT THEM. She needs her parents' support and she needs her coach's energy and enthusiasm.

What are my criteria for you to be entered into Medal classes?

A beautiful position. (I want to send "A" positions into the ring- not "B" or "C". I can't fix position faults for you. I can only point them out and show you the correct way. It is up to you to form correct habits by practicing them. See "Progress" above)

The ability to ride your horse correctly on the flat at all times. (Pony riders will ride on soft contact and will keep the pony bent around corners. Horse riders will show even more sophistication and will have their horse softly "on the bit." This will be demonstrated without being prompted or reminded. See "Progress" above. Those of you who hope to earn a college scholarship should be able to demonstrate the above on a school horse)

The ability to ride without stirrups for an INDEFINITE period of time without complaint.

The ability to correctly perform the following schooling maneuvers: Pony riders- turn on the forehand, turn on the haunches, back. Horse riders in addition- counter canter, shoulder-in, haunches-in. (See "Progress" above)

The attitude of a true HORSEMAN:

The horse always comes first.

The rider looks to herself for improvement before she blames her horse.

The rider is always looking to improve her knowledge of horse care. (She should be able to "ace" horsemanship questions)

The rider shows RESPECT and is a true role model to other riders. She is respectful to her parents.

She is respectful to her horse. She is respectful to her fellow riders. She is respectful around the barn and to her equipment. She is respectful to her coach. (See "Grateful" above)

The rider has the work ethic of an Equestrian Athlete.

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