

AMERICAN Royalty

Competing in the challenging American Royal horse show is the normal for senior Elizabeth Jackson. / SARAH EGGER + GRACE FREEMAN

COMMONLY USED EQUESTRIAN TERMS

EQUITATION: Done with English attire — a jacket, a button-up long-sleeve shirt, breeches and long boots — this jumping class requires that the horse and rider clear 8-12 obstacles in a particular pattern.

HUNTER UNDER SADDLE: A Hunter is a horse well suited for jumping natural obstacles in the process of hunting. It is a style of horse. Not a breed. This particular class judges the ease with which the horse moves and changes gaits. The rider wears English attire.

WESTERN PLEASURE AND HORSEMANSHIP: In these classes, the rider wears Western attire, usually slacks with a shirt and a cowboy hat. Judging evaluates the manners and suitability of the horse as it moves through the three required gaits: walk, trot and canter as well as the ability of the rider to control the horse. All horses and riders are in the ring and judged at the same time.

SHOWMANSHIP: In this class, the rider is on the ground next to the horse rather than riding. The rider and the horse are judged on appearance as well as mannerisms. This is one of the more difficult classes.

HALTER: Another class where the rider is on the ground. The horse is judged based on conformity to established standards for the breed.

GREEN HORSE: A horse that is young and untrained

HIGH POINT AWARD: A general overall ranking of the highest performing horses in a class.

Two weekends ago, senior Elizabeth Jackson walked out of the American Royal Quarter Horse Show with an extra belt buckle. These buckles are more than just trophies; they are worn in shows and instill a sense of pride in the rider.

Jackson competed in the Quarter Horse American Royal in Equitation, Hunter Under Saddle, Horsemanship, Western Pleasure, Showmanship and Halter from Sept. 6 to Sept. 9.

Showmanship is usually one of the first classes of the day; it involves competing on the ground next to your horse (for more information on showmanship and other classes, see the sidebar).

“My showmanship class, when I went in my pattern, was correct, but it didn’t really stick out,” Jackson said.

Because of this, Jackson did not place as well in this class.

After competing in various shows for 11 years, this was not Jackson’s first buckle.

“It was just another show for me since I’ve been doing it for so long. But there was pressure because some of my good friends that I train with were in the same class as me,” Jackson said.

She does not show for awards or prizes, though.

“I get to be around all the horses,” Jackson said. “I’m in it for the horses.”

Because it is a judged sport, none of the results can be exact. At shows like the American Royal, where there are four judges, each one may award points slightly differently. One of the most important things for a competitor to remember is confidence.

Looking confident is all in the posture. Stand up straight, and look the judge in the eye. Clothing also matters. The competitor’s outfit shows if he or she is a serious option for first place or someone who just showed up. If the competitor thinks his or her horse is the best horse in the ring, the judges will believe it, too.

“The judges can tell how much confidence you have when you walk out. They can just tell. There is a presence,” Jackson said. “I would want to have more confidence when I go in the ring.”

Outside of competing, Jackson has helped train novice horses. She has also helped at a summer camp where she gave lessons to children who had never ridden before.

For Jackson, horses are a huge part of her life. She works at the Mill Creek Animal Hospital and aspires to be a veterinarian.

“I’m trying to get a scholarship,” Jackson said. “I sent in a video application for the Kansas State Equestrian team.”

The K-State Equestrian Team is a prestigious program, ranked sixth in the nation.

Jackson knows how much horses mean to her.

“It is worth getting up in the morning at 5 a.m. for,” Jackson said.



(LEFT) Judges view senior Elizabeth Jackson and her horse Ty at the American Royal on Sept. 22. photo by Taylor Adcock

(RIGHT) Jackson rides her horse out of the arena on Sept 22, 2012 after winning third place in the event. photo by Reagan Key

(DOMINANT) Jackson trots her horse around the gate. photo by Taylor Adcock