



The South Lyon Equestrian Teams

As one of the first high school equestrian teams in the United States, South Lyon has historically been a strong contender in the statewide MIHA program. SLHS is also one of few that recognizes equestrian as **a full varsity sport** for athletes. South Lyon also participates in the MIHA junior division (middle school), started in 2004. The team is coached by Kate McCallum, Deb Yanke, and Ann Houpenbecker. Last year, South Lyon High equestrians were DISTRICT CHAMPS, REGIONAL CHAMPS and State Finalists! Our 2 junior teams also took FIRST in their divisions. Historically, SL is one of the winningest teams in the school and in the state with multiple district wins and state championship finalists. We still hold the record for most State Championship titles.

What does an equestrian meet look like? The high school varsity season consists of three day-long meets, held on Saturdays in late August and September. The junior division holds only one meet – usually the first Saturday in June. At both the senior and junior level, 17 events are held during the day – including showmanship, hunt seat, saddleseat, jumping, western, trail and speed and action classes. The meets are held at the equestrian field at Milford High School, beginning at 8 a.m. and usually ending about 6. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to cheer us on! Points are awarded to the top 8 placings in every class. In the high school division, the cumulative placing point total (from all three meets) determines the district champion. In other words, each kid competes to place for the team. Most points at the end win. The top 2 in each *district* division travel on to compete at a regional level in Owosso, and the two top scoring teams from each *region* go on to compete at the state meet, held in Midland in October.

How do you prepare for competition? Based on the size of our teams (which can vary tremendously from year to year), a certain number of rider "slots" are allotted for each meet. Those entries must be strategically distributed among the 17 classes to be competitive – so each rider may be entered in multiple classes, representing several different riding disciplines. To prepare, team practices are held– typically going over patterns and introducing concepts that the riders (or horses) may not have done before (such as reading an intricate pattern, or walking over a tarp, or opening or closing a gate for trail class). That's also the time when riders have the opportunity to try different riding styles and begin to appreciate the differences (and similarities) between them.

Riders are responsible for practicing at home as well. The junior division typically practices once weekly for the five or six weeks leading up to the meet; senior high practices are also usually weekly. Additional practices may be scheduled (for both the junior and senior division) as needed. We do not aim to replace your lessons!

For more information on the statewide program and rulebook: see the MIHA Website (<http://www.miha.org/>)

Questions? Contact Kate McCallum (ms.mccallum@gmail.com or mccallumk@slcs.us) You can email for either high school or junior division information.

Junior Division Practice Dates: Begin late April through the week of the meet (June 12); a paperwork meeting will be held prior to first practice; date/location of paperwork meeting to be announced. There is an e-mail sign up to begin receiving information from the coach.