Riding Smart

For Amanda Peterson, Rochester, Minn., it is not just horning around. Competing on the equestrian team at the University of Minnesota, Crookston is serious business for this student-athlete. She was the top western rider Zone 9, Region 3 and competed for the 2009 American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Trophy against 22 other riders. The national competition for the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) took place in Murfreesboro, Tenn., at the end of April.

Peterson says she was ready for this year’s competition, “I have been working hard and riding smart and that was my goal at nationals as well.”

She did ride smart. The junior finished in tenth place overall in the competition, and with that, ends her season on a high note.

The equestrian team’s Head Coach Brooke Leininger is impressed with Peterson’s skill. “Amanda is a focused rider, she was competing against all the best riders in the nation, and she represented the team with proficiency and even under pressure, she handled herself like a true professional.”

Peterson has been riding horses since she was in third grade and back home continues to enjoy showing Paints. Riding with the U of M, Crookston Equestrian Team means shows five to six weekends during the season with two shows per weekend. During that time, riders accumulate points, and the top two in regions go to semi-nationals and the top four go to nationals to compete for the AQHA Cup.

Riding is very competitive; both the western and hunt teams in Region 3 compete against teams like North Dakota State University, Fargo, N.D.; South Dakota State University, Brookings, S.D.; St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minn.; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; and University of Wisconsin campuses in Eau Claire, Madison, La Crosse, River Falls, and Milwaukee; along with several others.

Always active and keeping herself busy, Peterson considers herself to be good at prioritizing tasks. Something this student-athlete has had to hone as a double major in equine science and agricultural business.

When she looks back on her collegiate career thus far, she says two things stand out in particular. “I have my two best friends as roommates in Centennial Hall, and they are both on the equestrian team with me,” Peterson reflects. “I will always remember when our team qualified for semifinals; qualifying as a team capped off an amazing season for all of us.”

If you are interested in supporting scholarships for student-athletes, contact Bill Tyrrell, director of athletic fundraising at 218-281-8436 (btyrrell@umn.edu).


Amanda Peterson was named Outstanding Female Athlete of the Year this spring. Peterson double-qualified for regionals in horsemanship and reining and was the high point or reserve high point rider in eight shows. She scored 75 points, good for top point earner recognition on the team and in the region.