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Gegi on Jumper Equitation

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# Equitation Expands To The Jumper Ring

*BHSA Debuts New Class This Year*

**By Gegi Winslett**

Equitation is both the science and the art of riding a horse to improve its performance. Good equitation gives the rider security and control over the horse, and puts the rider in the best position to use the aids effectively. Correct equitation over fences is the style, form and technique of the rider which enables the horse to perform most correctly, efficiently and confidently over the course, including on the flat between the fences and over the jumps.

Correct equitation is an “art” but not an art form. We (as judges) are not looking for the “posed” passenger rider. Even the most perfect style alone will not make a great rider.

There is no substitute for good judgment, courage, timing, patience and “feel” which are the components of an effective, results-oriented performance in the show ring.

The fact that good equitation is the key to getting the best performance from your horse has long been recognized in the hunter discipline, with a multitude of equitation classes offered at our local horse shows. Good equitation is also key to jumper performance as well, and this has been recognized at our national shows for years.

This year, the Battlefield Horse Show Association decided to include a jumper **continued on p. 11**



Olympic show jumping gold medalist, Joe Fargis, has always displayed the hallmarks of proper form over fences, particularly the beautiful following hand seen here while competing at the Upperville Horse Show. *PHOTO COURTESY: LIZ CALLAR*



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Joe Fargis, an icon in the jumper ring, exemplifies good equitation.  
PHOTO COURTESY: LIZ CALLAR

**Jumper Eq.....from p. 7** equitation class in it's offerings for our VHSA Associate shows, recognizing the need to encourage correct equitation.

This new class is open to junior and adult amateur riders. The class is to be shown over a course of at least 10 fences, with at least one combination, four oxers, and a minimum of at least two additional jumper-style tests. These include a liverpool, a narrow fence, a roll-back turn, a fence at the end of the ring, and an option fence. It is offered at two heights--2'6" and 3"--with spreads not to exceed the height. Courses must be measured, the jumps numbered, the time allowed, and the optimum times posted.

The judge may ask some or all of the riders to return on the flat (the number of riders is at the judge's discretion). Flatwork may include shortening and lengthening of stride at all gaits, work without irons, and other tests the judge deems appropriate. Riders are requested to wear coats and boots, although paddock boots with jodphurs or matching half chaps are allowed.

The class is judged on hands, seat, guidance, control, and optimum time, with numerical scoring. Exceeding the time allowed produces time faults, which reduce the numerical score. The judge wants to see the rider present the horse to  
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the course correctly, ask for and obtain the correct response to the aids, and be able to maintain their balance and position at all times. If you get "left" you go to the bottom of the heap. If you jump up the neck, you're in trouble. If you lose a stirrup, you're in bigger trouble.

The judging of equitation is one of the oldest forms of horse competition in the U.S. and is really unique to North America. The U.S. and Canada are known for their local, regional, and national equitation championships.

The U.S. has also long been known worldwide for the strength of its equitation competitors. For our BHSA jumper shows to include equitation is most timely; some might say long overdue.

In any sport, you need to learn the basics correctly before you ever develop your own modifications. Some top riders develop idiosyncrasies in their form but many of the top American jumper riders, both today and in the past, could win both an equitation class and a Grand Prix--riders like Joe Fargis, Bezie Madden, McLain Ward and Bernie Traurig, to name a few. These riders came out of the equitation ranks and continue to use those skills throughout their riding careers. You need to learn the principles of correct form first.

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