



Anisa Hajibrahim (12) jumps with her horse Consul. Photo provided by Anisa Hajibrahim.

The Art of

Equestrian

Hannah Miller

Equestrian is a highly competitive sport involving horses and a rider. As it is very popular overseas, the overwhelming presence of equestrianism in Western culture is growing, with many riders bringing the sport here to Colorado. At Palmer Ridge, there are many students involved in Equestrian, a sport that not many other students are familiar with.

Anisa Hajibrahim (12), a current Palmer Ridge High School senior and commit at UC Davis for Equestrian, has always loved riding from a very young age. Making her riding debut in Kentucky, Hajibrahim said that “I was always intrigued by the sport, and was always fascinated by horses. After taking a couple lessons, I absolutely fell in love with horses and

horseback riding. I have been competing for 6 1/2 years now, but have been riding for almost 12 years. I love this sport, and the lessons I have learned from it!”

The one thing that guarantees success is trust. Liana Miller (10) explains that a rider’s bond with their horse is the most important thing. “A lot of people are just like oh you are sitting on a horse, but I feel like they do not understand that most of the time the horse is very insecure and you need to be strong in what you want the horse to do otherwise it will not do it.” said Miller. “If you go up the jump, the horse will stop unless you are like no we are going over this jump. If you get emotional on the horse they feel it, so it can get bad.” She also mentioned that it can be challenging to re-train an older horse to fit your style, as it can be a lot different.

While most people assume that equestrian, much like it’s name, means just riding, there is a more technical and challenging element to it. Both Hajibrahim and Liana Miller (10) admit that riding requires a high level of skill and composure. “I am an English rider, which means I jump horses and compete. I compete in something called Equitation, which is based on how well a rider can execute a course [a series of jumps you memorize and compete], and how well a rider’s form is over jumps.” said Hajibrahim. “There are different divisions that involve age, difficulty, and what specific horses are able to perform, or different heights. I currently compete in the 3’6” Equitation, which is pretty much the highest level of Equitation.” Miller, also competing in jumping, expressed an interest in barrel racing. “I like going fast, and with jumping you cannot always go fast, although sometimes you can. I like the feeling of it.”

While most sports only require a small amount of equipment, such as shin guards for soccer players and special shoes for basketball players, equestrian needs a lot more, to ensure both the safety of the rider and the horse. From special boots to protect the horses legs as they land from a jump, to saddle pads and half pads that

support the horses back underneath the saddle, the list goes on and on. “To make sure our tack doesn’t move, we put on girths, which will hold everything in place. We use martingales to keep our horses from tossing their heads up in the air, and we use bridles to help us assist our horses, so we are able to navigate them.” said Hajibrahim. In addition, the riders wear show coats, breeches, special shoe shirts, tall boots, gloves, and helmets. Although it can be very expensive to provide for both the horse and the rider, especially with the added veterinarian bills, board for the horse, and show fees, Hajibrahim ensures that it is worth it, as “horseback riding equipment can be expensive but it is very safe and high quality.”

Because the sport of equestrian is

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so rare here in the West, especially in Colorado, there is a mountain of opportunities for young riders looking to do something very special. In the small bubble of riding, many girls have had the chance to compete against riders of the USA national team and various D1 (NCAA Division 1) programs, allowing them to expand their opportunities and connections. Miller, a current sophomore at Palmer Ridge, stated that she is beginning her college search, keeping her options open to possibly ride in college, or at least continuing her career as more of a hobby. Hajibrahim, however, was one of five students this fall to sign to continue their athletic careers at the collegiate level. Signing with UC Davis, a Division 1 equestrian program in California,

stated that she is “very excited to be a part of such a great program” and that “it is very cool that I can ride horses in college and represent an amazing school on the Division I level.” As for future plans, Hajibrahim hopes to always spend time with horses, as she “will definitely continue horse showing in the future and continue to work with horses in hopes of becoming an Equine Ophthalmologist.”

“My advice to new and young riders is never give up, always work hard, and never compare yourself to others. There are many riders in this sport who are fortunate enough to horse show every weekend, have parents as trainers, and have access to some of the best horses/training in our nation.” said Hajibrahim. “This can be pretty defeating when you do not have those kinds of opportunities. However, if you work hard and put a lot of time into what you do, as well as give 110% effort each time at practice or in the show ring, you will open more doors for your future and become a bigger name in this sport.

Anisa Hajibrahim (12) is shown with her horse, Consul. Photo provided by Anisa Hajibrahim.



Liana Miller (10) competes with her horse in a jump. Picture provided by Liana Miller



Anisa Hajibrahim (12) competes with her horse Henney. Picture provided by Anisa Hajibrahim.



Liana Miller (10) jumps with her horse in competition. Photo provided by Liana Miller.

