

Equestrian team rides home with experience

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by TASHA CLARK, reporter

The Baylor women's equestrian team took first place Saturday and fifth place Sunday at its first-ever English-style Intercollegiate Horse Association Show at Texas A&M University.

Zionsville, Ind., freshman Nicole Brown; Aurora, Ill., sophomore Lera Thompson; and Houston freshman Susie Foster placed first in their sections. Brown placed first in the open class for both jumping fences and flat disciplines, and Thompson took first in the advanced walk-trot-canter.

Competitions included equitation over fences, equitation on the flat and walk-trot-canter disciplines.

A&M and Oklahoma State University tied for first overall after Sunday's competition.

"The fact that they were competitive their first time, and that they will just get better, makes me believe we'll be a team to be reckoned with," head Coach Ellen White said.

Baylor athletics established the equestrian team this fall, hiring Baylor alumna White as head coach and Trista Armstrong as the assistant coach. White specializes in coaching English riding and Armstrong specializes in Western.

Armstrong remains positive about the future of the equestrian team.

"Our team is awesome considering that the head coach was hired in January and this is a brand-new sport," Armstrong said. "A lot of people are not aware that Baylor has a Big 12 equestrian team, and considering the talent that we have on our team this year, it's just going to get better and better."

Armstrong said White attracted a lot of students who rode English-style to the team. Other students decided to try out after discovering Baylor established the team.

"I've been riding since I was 7 and competing since then. I was already at Baylor and they said they were getting an equestrian team, so I decided to try out and I love it," Thompson said.

The equestrian team works out twice a week on strength and conditioning and rides every day to practice for competitions.

"A lot of it is new to a lot of people because you don't have to spend a lot of time in the weight room to be faster. It's about a skill and feel for a horse," Armstrong said.

Baylor will have its first home show this weekend.

South Dakota and Southern Methodist University will compete head-to-head against Baylor at 2 p.m. Friday at Willow Spring Farm.

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Manvel sophomore Deirdre Sabo practices for upcoming shows on Wednesday in the arena at Willow Spring Farm.