

Interschool Equestrian Challenge

I am extremely proud of the team of six riders who competed at the Clarence Valley Equestrian Challenge at Grafton. It was a pleasure to be their Team Manager and share such an action packed, exciting weekend with all its ups and downs that go with equestrian competitions. There were 180 horses at this event, all top quality horses and the competition was strong.

Rachael Norton's father floated her horse all the way from Goulbourn for the weekend. This required a stopover night on the way here and again on the way back, as well as frequent stops along the way to allow the horse to have a break from constantly standing in a float.



Our 'camp' area was close to the stables and of course Rachael's father and horse were there first, selecting the best site for the weekend. As each team member arrived, the usual preparation began for the competition the next day. At these events, reserving stables for fellow team members is a priority so that everyone is together and the early arrivals took care to do this.



To prepare for a competition, each horse needs to be washed and manes and tails shampooed and conditioned ready to be plaited and braided. The mane needs to be plaited and either sewn in place or held with rubber bands in rosettes and the tail is braided or clipped and trimmed at the bottom. Once all of this is completed, the horses are rugged in what is called a show set consisting of rug and hood which is light weight cotton and prevents them from getting dirty and undoing all the hard work of 'plaiting up'. As each team member completes

their own preparation, they then go and help anyone who has arrived late or just simply needs help

and this is not only their own team members. Assistance is given to anyone requiring it because this is the culture of people with horses. Once all of this is completed, everyone feeds their horse, feeds themselves and tries to get an early night ready for the 5.30am start the next day.



The whole team were beautifully presented and I was so proud of them as they took their place in the March Past. It was a school with a School Banners and School Saddle Cloths that took out this award and then it was time for hack classes and rider classes and our team were strong competitors in all of these events.



Macey Donohoe - 3rd Hack over 16hh, 5th 1.1 Dressage, 5th Keyhole Race.

Rachael Norton in the Hacking





Bronte Donohoe – In the Hack class

Gemma Hutchinson
– In the hack class
which she won!



These events were in the main arena and clouds of dust stirred up by so many hooves, meant that at times it was hard to see the competitors and the competitors were choking on it. Parents were kept busy with keeping everyone hydrated and our team handled the conditions well. Dressage was next and then show jumping to end a very full day.

Emma Cahill – Show jumping

Saturday night, team members and parents all enjoy a get together and this is where we all share our days events and everyone laughs a lot and in general relaxes. There was a total fire ban in place, eliminating the usual fire for everyone to enjoy, but we all managed to have lots of laughs with teams from other schools coming to our camp to join us for some socialising.



Bronte Donohoe – In the Bonfield Bounce

Emma Cahill – In the Bonfield Bounce

Sunday was all sporting events, so no plaiting required and the rule for these events is to have fun and our team did not disappoint. Everyone had a great time and everyone did well





Macey Donohoe - Bending



Caitlin



Gossiping!

Our team had not ever competed in team penning, so this was a whole new fun event to do, where three riders have to select three tagged cows and by using team work, put all three cows (they were actually heifers) in a pen, in the time allowed. There was much encouragement from the spectators and a lot of laughter. The winning team was brilliant and deserved to win - it was not either of our teams but they really had fun.



Team Penning – a team of 3 had to get 3 Heifers into a pen in the fastest time.

The entire competition was run very well and we all, team members and myself, left the grounds on Sunday afternoon, exhausted but happy. These wonderful girls that competed as Team Woolgoolga, are to be commended and 'congratulations' doesn't seem to be enough to be able to compliment them all on their sportsmanship, their dedication and commitment to their sport. Equestrians do not put their equipment, their horse, away after the weekends competition, this horse is a daily commitment and a daily responsibility, requiring feeding, a huge expense, worming and feet trimming regularly, another big expense, along with rugging. The parents are also to be congratulated on their willingness to give up their time, provide a horse float and a towing vehicle to be able to transport their enthusiastic offspring to all of these events and support them in their passion for their horses and this sport.



Rachael Norton

Here is a list of Team Woolgoolga's achievements for the weekend. Rachael Norton - 2nd Bending Race, 3rd Barrel Race, 3rd Bonfield Bounce, 3rd Pleasure Hack. Bronte Donohoe - 4th Hack over 16hh, 2nd Pleasure Hack, 5th C grade Showjumping, 3rd Bending Race, 2nd Barrel Race, 4th Bonfield Bounce. Emma Cahill - 4th Bending Race, 2nd Keyhole Race, 3rd Bonfield Bounce. Gemma Hutchinson - 1st Hack 14.2hh, 4th Elementary dressage, 3rd Girl Rider 16yrs, 1st Pleasure Hack. Macey Donohoe - 3rd Hack over 16hh, 5th 1.1 Dressage, 5th Keyhole Race.

A fabulous effort - well done girls.

I would like to thank Rhonda Kesby very much for stepping into the role of Team Manager for these dedicated girls. Rhonda is a local riding instructor who has been involved with pony club for a considerable number of years. She has taught many local children to ride and has continued to mentor those who are dedicated enough to compete at local and interstate competitions. An experienced mentor is vital in any sport and these students are extremely lucky to have someone of Rhonda's experience to help them.

Christine Duver