

Saddlin' Up

Giddyup, Horsey!

...story courtesy of Mrs. Amelia Ellison



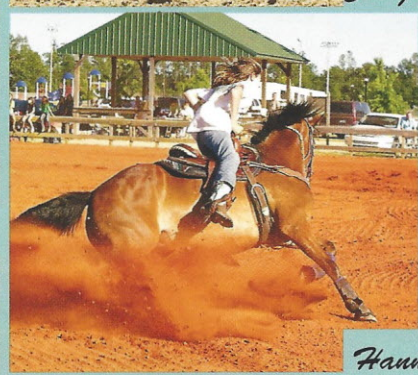
Maddie Denton



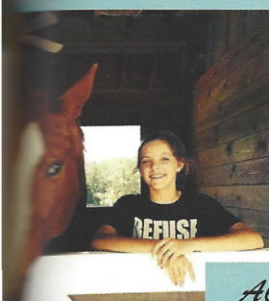
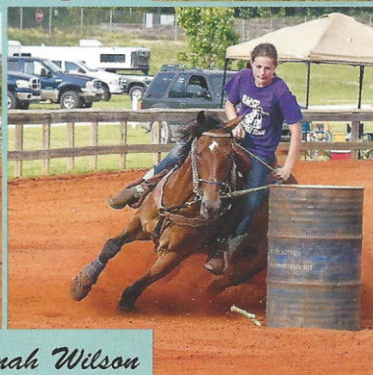
Erin Johnson



Creighton Ellison



Hannah Wilson



Ally Robinson



Kimmy Albert



...girls at RWA participate in equine events including those that ride English in hunter jumper and dressage classes, those that barrel race with the Barrel Horse Association; and those that rodeo with the SC High School Rodeo Association, Foothills Rodeo Association, IPRA, or Junior SRA. Rodeo includes bronc riding, saddleback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping and bull riding. Girls compete in breakaway roping, goat tying, barrel racing, and pole bending. Both boys and girls compete in team roping, cutting, and reining.

These sports require a lot of dedication and expense. Athletes practice a horse about 2 hours every other day. Most riders have more than one horse or pony so they are practicing every day. Before practice can start, riders must care for their horse by brushing and cleaning out their hooves and then saddling. This is hard and heavy work that each athlete must do. It builds a bond with the horse and ensures the rider knows the condition of the riding gear. Horses must also be fed usually twice a day, have fresh water, and sometimes be given special meds or supplements daily. A farrier usually comes about every 8 weeks to shoe or trim the feet. An equine dentist comes once a year to be sure their teeth don't hurt, and they are able to eat and be ridden. Shots and a health test are usually given once a year by a vet. Some horses even have a chiropractor and get acupuncture as needed. Then there are also accidents that require a vet must be called at any time of day or night. Equipment, feed and dr. bills add to the expense of a horse. Then when you are ready to compete, there are entry fees to be paid.

Traveling with a horse is another expense. You must take all your riding gear, meds, feed, hay, portable fence and riding clothes. English riders wear breeches, pants sometimes called britches, a helmet, and tall boots. Rodeo girls wear jeans, long sleeve shirts, boots, spurs, belt and cowboy hats. They also wear their ropes and gloves. It is the athlete's responsibility to have everything they need. Rodeos are usually a weekend event, riding both Friday and Saturday during the season (fall and spring) and occur 3 weekends out of every month.

Rewards can vary between associations. However, the greatest reward is the bond between horse and rider that comes from the time they spend together. Athletes also meet and make friends with others just like you from across the state and country. You can also win ribbons, belt buckles, saddles, money and the chance to travel to national competitions.

Equine athletes include Ally Robinson competing in English dressage; Kimmy Albert and Hannah Wilson in barrel racing with the NBHA; Maddie Denton, Erin Johnson and Creighton Ellison in rodeo.

Rodeo is a dangerous sport dealing with an unpredictable animal ten times your weight. It may require jumping 6 to 8 feet, covering all types of ground; going at speeds close to 30 mph, jumping off your horse while it's running, or throwing a rope and wrapping it around the horn of your saddle while going at top speed. Even though it is dangerous, hard work, time consuming, and expensive, the love between horse and rider is not like any other sport. It is a team sport where the horse and rider must trust and depend on each other. It is a passion and a way of life for each equine athlete.