

INTERCOLLEGIATE CORNER - OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY



Photo by Jules Riether

The Otterbein University Team is based out of Westerville, Ohio. It has roughly fifteen members with riders ranging from those who have never evented to Modified. The team has continued to grow over the years and many Alumni have gone on to do great things. Eventing Coach, Julia Spatt, graduated from Otterbein with a degree in Equine Business Management in 2015. She went on to groom for several riders, including Jacob Fletcher, before returning to coach at Otterbein in 2018.

In addition to the Eventing Team, Otterbein has IHSA (Intercollegiate Horse Show Association) and IDA (Intercollegiate Dressage Association) teams. Just this Spring, Otterbein's IHSA team placed tenth at Nationals and their IDA team won Nationals

for the third year in a row. All three teams train out of the fifty-two stall Austin E Knowlton Center for Equine Science. The barn is equipped with a large indoor arena, an outside arena, and a cross country field. President, Riley Leibeck said, "I think that a really unique thing about our program is that the whole team is at one barn. All three teams are at one barn and it makes it easy to support each other. We have lots of coaches we can ride with." In fact in addition to Julia, all six coaches are Otterbein graduates. Riley also pointed out that the team is really unique due to the quality of horses that get donated. There have been horses who have been in top programs all over the country including Buck Davidson, Jacob Fletcher, and Doug Payne's barns.

In addition to the riding teams, Otterbein has three Equine Majors including Equine Business Management, Pre-Vet, and Equine Vet-Tech as well as several minors. However, it is not a requirement to be an equine major to ride on the team. Vice President, Molly Casey, is a Nursing Major.

Riley and Molly were asked their favorite parts about the team. Molly responded, "My favorite part is the people. We have such a tight niche group of riders. It's how we've made friends." Riley answered, "My favorite part of the team is going to horse shows and showing up for your friends and supporting them. I've never been to a signal phase of a horse trial and not had at least one teammate cheering me on."

They were then asked how the team has shaped their college experience. Molly said, "The team is my college experience. We have made lifelong friendships that will last long past our college

careers." Team member Jules Richter shared, "I wouldn't have any of the friends I have without the team."

Every year the Eventing team travels to Aiken for Spring Break. They go down for about ten days and compete two back to back weekends to help kickstart the season before the weather in Area 8 is suitable for showing. When asked about the annual Aiken trip Molly said, "We get a lot of schooling in and it is a great time for team bonding. We get to grow closer to our teammates."

While Otterbein has been National Champions three times at IDA Nationals and have had many top placing at IHSA Nationals, they've yet to make the trip to compete at the Intercollegiate Eventing Championship. They plan to make their debut at the 2024 Champs at Stable View. The Cardinals will be a force to be reckoned with because while they will be rookies at Eventing Champs, they have plenty of experience at coming out on top at the National level.