

While Black Hawk College has been a top contender for many years, 2022 was the first time the college's Western Equestrian Team claimed victory at the IHSA National Championships.



The BHC Western Equestrian Team after winning the 2022 IHSA/NSBA Team National Championship. Photo by Andrew Ryback.

"The founder of the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association, Bob Cacchione, was excited to tell us that Black Hawk College East Campus was the first community college to win the IHSA Western Team Championship," said Bekah Irish, coach and assistant professor of equestrian science.

BHC riders edged out 10-time national champion team, the Ohio State University.



Nineteen students made the trip to Nationals - nine to compete and 10 to help prepare the seven horses that were hauled 800 miles to Harrisburg, PA, for the competition.

During the regular season, the team won eight of its nine horse shows and claimed the Zone 7, Region 5 Western Championship for the 18th year.

"The consistency and quality of our riders over the years speak to the caliber of the Equestrian Program as a whole and the students it attracts," Irish said.

"It is important to note that all of my equine colleagues - Aaron Callahan, Drew Cotton, Heather Hochstatter, Barb Gerbitz and Selena Finn - play a role in the success of the BHC Western Equestrian Team," she said.

"I am so grateful to have Kinsey Hall serving as the assistant coach," Irish said. "Kinsey was a member of the 2017 Reserve National Champion team at Black Hawk and has contributed immensely to the success of this team!"

While only nine students competed at nationals, every student on the team was an integral component of the success this season.

"I am so proud of their work ethic, character, determination and dedication to quality horsemanship," Irish said. "Throughout the season, these students held each other accountable, cheered for one another, prioritized the horse, and never stopped believing in themselves and their team."

[View detailed end-of-season results.](#)

[View IHSA National All-Academic Awards.](#)

[View IHSA Western Equestrian Team 2021-22 roster.](#)



2022 National Champion Team riders:

- Haley Bucher – Washington, IL
- Autumn Cary – Syracuse, NE
- Brooke Kiefer – West Bend, WI
- Hannah Lemay – Tuscola, IL
- Josie Spratt – Purcell, OK
- Anna Wilhelm – Shannon, IL

2022 National Champion Team individual qualifiers:

- Kayla Jiras - North Liberty, IA
- Samantha Lind - Maple Park, IL
- Aleah Wykert - Deer Creek, IL

Students who traveled and helped prepare horses:

- Emma Anderson - East Moline, IL
- Kelsey Doty - Port Byron, IL
- Sarah Korthals - Geneseo, IL
- Makenna Pidgeon - New London, IA
- Kennedy Roth - Kalona, IA
- Jordan Rydl - Boone, IA
- Addison Shireman - Argos, IN
- Savannah Stamann - Brimfield, IL
- Taylor Yordy - Leaf River, IL
- Lily Zomparelli - Schererville, IN

Horses owned by Black Hawk College who competed in Nationals (all were shown by students from other schools):

- Wayne - 2 national titles
- Dustin - 1 national title
- Fred - 1 national title
- Sheldon - 1 national title
- Felix - Top 5
- Hooker - Top 5

“This is a testament to the quality of the horses housed in the BHC Equestrian Program and the dedication of the students who diligently prepared them for all of the competing riders,” Irish said.

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