

The BHC Western Equestrian Team remains undefeated after the first postseason meet and has earned the chance to defend its history-making Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association Western Team Championship.



2023 IHSA Semifinals Championship Team

"I credit the success of this team to each member's dedication and hard work, their continued belief in themselves and their team, and their ability to hold each other to the highest of standards in and out of the arena," said Bekah Irish, coach and assistant professor of equestrian science.

At the end of February, Black Hawk College hosted a Regional Championship. Riders must qualify for this event, and only the Top 2 placings in each division advance to the Semifinals.



2023 Regional qualifiers:

- Autumn Cary - Syracuse, NE - Reining and Open Horsemanship
- Samantha Lind - Maple Park, IL - Ranch Riding and Open Horsemanship
- Jordan Rydl - Boone, IA - Ranch Riding and Level II Horsemanship
- Grace Strief - Cascade, IA - Level I Horsemanship
- Kurstin Walker - Gentry, AR - Level I Horsemanship
- Kennedy Roth - Kalona, IA - Rookie Horsemanship
- Katie Aeschbach - Black Earth, WI - Rookie Horsemanship
- Abby Schunning - Caledonia, IL - Rookie Horsemanship
- Haley Bucher - Washington, IL - Rookie Horsemanship
- Sarah Alarie - Downs, IL - Rookie Horsemanship
- Taegan Hanlin - Plainville, IL - Rookie Horsemanship
- McKenna Konvicka - Havana, IL - Beginner Horsemanship
- Morgan Culbertson - Bettendorf, IA - Beginner Horsemanship
- Connor Grunst - Spring Grove, IL - Beginner Horsemanship

During the same weekend, Black Hawk College was announced as the 2023 Regional Champion Team, earning the chance to advance to the Semifinals as a team.



2023 IHSA Regional Championship Team

Individual riders who qualified for Semifinals (Top 4 at Semifinals qualify for Nationals):

- Katie Aeschbach - Rookie Horsemanship (7th place)
- Haley Bucher - Rookie Horsemanship (1st place and nationally qualified)
- Autumn Cary - Reining (4th place and nationally qualified)
- McKenna Konvicka - Beginner Horsemanship (3rd place and nationally qualified)
- Jordan Rydl - Ranch Riding (finalist) and Level II Horsemanship (4th place and nationally qualified)
- Kurstin Walker - Level I Horsemanship (3rd place and nationally qualified)

Black Hawk College won the overall team championship at Semifinals, outpacing four-year schools from Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Utah. The win qualified BHC riders for Nationals as a team.

The Top 4 teams from each Semifinals qualify for Nationals. There are three Semifinals in the country, so 12 teams will compete May 4-7 in Lexington, KY.

BHC team riders:

- Haley Bucher - 2nd in Level 1 Horsemanship
- Autumn Cary - 1st in Reining, 3rd in Open Horsemanship
- Abbigail Froelich - Muscatine, IA - 1st in Beginner Horsemanship
- Kayla Schroeder - North Liberty, IA - 8th in Rookie Horsemanship
- Grace Strief - 1st in Ranch Riding
- Kurstin Walker - 1st in Level II Horsemanship

"I would like to thank BHC graduate Caitlynn Marit for making the trip and helping the team prepare, as well as the amazing support network at Black Hawk College East Campus," Irish said.

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