

Hidden sport gallops onto center stage

by Jenny Forster

When thinking about "sports," it's hard not to picture a team of athletes running around throwing or kicking a ball, but there are other less conventional sports out there which receive less publicity, while providing an activity just as hard to master.

Horseback riding is a sport where the athlete doesn't rely on teammates, but instead a large animal. It may not be the first sport to come to mind, but for Junior Melissa Rogers and senior Jessica Meyer, it's the most important.

Rogers has been riding for almost eight years and rides an average of three days a week at Bit-by-Bit stable in Uncasville. Riding isn't just a hobby for her; she embraces the competitive aspect of the sport at shows with Connecticut Horse Shows Organization (CHSA) and Tri-State Two-Phase shows.

Rogers has a horse named Sunny, who will be ten in March. "She's an amazing horse that can do anything from leadline to three foot fences," she says. Rogers jokes saying, "[Sunny's] very much a mare in that she's grumpy when on the ground, but once you get on her and start working she couldn't be happier."



photo courtesy of Melissa Rogers

"When I ride there's nothing that could bother me, no matter how bad my day has been, I can just relax and have fun for a while," says junior Melissa Rogers (above with horse Sunny).

As for Meyer, she has been riding for ten years and tries to ride a couple times a month. She owns a twenty-two year old quarter horse named Doc. She says, "He is a really good horse who likes to sit back and relax...he doesn't like to work much."

Though their approaches to riding are slightly different, both girls find immense joy from the activity. "

I love when I'm riding and I feel a connection between horse and rider," says Meyer. "One of the cool things about riding is that you are able to move with the animal. Sometimes it can make you feel like you are flying"