

## **Equitation Class Hints for the new Side Saddle Competitor**

When you enter the ring, every single one of you has the same opportunity and will be judged according to what actually happens on the day.

Firstly you need to really read the wording of the class you want to enter and if you do not fully understand the criteria, then ask someone experienced in that class.

When we are talking about side saddle, many new riders do not realise that in an Equitation class, it is the rider that is being judged and not the horse, although one should compliment the other.

In Open Equitation - Adult and Junior riders [no lead reins] enter the ring together and are judged as one class so will walk, trot and canter together on both reins. If a large class we may pull in the smaller pony/rider and send them out afterwards. There will be two sets of rosettes, so the 1st - 3rd will be placed as a class and also separately as Adult and Junior, i.e. so it is possible for a junior to be 1st overall, if the second placed is an adult then she takes the first place SSA Adult rosette and so on. The shows actual rosettes go in the normal 1st - 8th placings.

The criteria for all SSA Equitation classes can be found in the SSA Handbook - I am looking for a supple rider in balance with her horse/pony who can perform the required movements with elegance and ease. The better your horse is schooled astride the easier it will be. The required movements, unless at the National Show, are a freestyle show not exceeding two minutes to include trot and canter on each rein, some walk ideally in a straight line, and it is nice to finish with a halt, salute and smile. This show should be rhythmical and easy to follow from the ground, we all make mistakes so do not worry if something goes wrong, just carry on.

I will then take a good look at your turnout and saddle fit, particularly the safety stirrup fitting and the closeness of the lower leg to the leaping head - your leg must never be jammed up against this head or pushed backwards away from it. The horse should be clean, well plaited - unless a native breed - and the tack supple, well cared for and a suitable fit for your horse and yourself. Your habit ideally should be well fitting and not creased - jacket level to saddle seat and apron hem level and parallel to the ground, the apron sitting nicely across the top leg and a hand's breadth above spur line on boot.

Your hat should be well fitting and these days if you wear a 3 point harness, there is no need to wear a bun but all hair should be neatly tucked away in a smart net. Gentlemen at qualifying level should wear a well fitted tweed jacket and breeches, not baggy, well fitting hat, shirt, tie and tidy hair.

Read the Side Saddle Association Handbook every year [rules change] for every class you want to enter, regarding age and spur and length of cane, colour of gloves etc. Lastly, do not forget your points card, take it in your pocket in the ring or you will not only lose the points but also your SSA rosette that you worked so hard for. We know that more men and boys are now entering side saddle classes and that some riders ride on the off-side and this is taken into account when judging.

I wish you all the very best of luck.

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