



Paula Inman of Farmington Hills, a senior at Our Lady of Mercy, clears an obstacle aboard Final Choice in the Large Junior Worker Hunter competition in the recent Detroit Horse Show at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club. (Staff photo by Dick Kelley)

Mercy senior pursues success in jumping ring

By BOB GROSS

Let Paul Inman's experience be a warning to all fathers.

Inman, a resident of Farmington Hills, took his daughter Paula for a drive one fine day about seven years ago. Paula saw some horses grazing in a meadow and decided she wanted to take riding lessons.

She started taking lessons at Centaur Farms in West Bloomfield, now the Detroit Curling Club, and today Inman is the proud owner of five horses — one open jumper, one junior jumper and three hunters.

And Paula, a senior at Farmington Hills Our Lady of Mercy, is a top competitor in both the junior hunter and junior jumper classes in shows such as the recent Detroit Horse Show at the Bloomfield Open Hunt Club.

Paula, a Reserve Champion for Junior Hunters at the recent Metamora (Mich.) Hunt Show, said she enjoys competing because of the challenge, "working with another mind — you're not working with a ball."

Competing in the hunter classes is especially challenging because of the judging involved. Basically, in jumping, it doesn't matter how the horse clears the obstacles as long as it is done without knocking down a rail. Hunters, on the other hand, are judged on the

style in which they clear the obstacles. Judges look for horses that provide their riders with smooth, safe and comfortable rides around the course.

THE COMPETITION in the junior hunter classes is tough, according to both of the Inmans. It takes a lot of time working with the horse to get them to the point of being competitive — Paula spends an hour and a half with each of her three hunters, six to seven days each week. During horse shows, she may be on the go competing and practicing from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. That doesn't leave her with a lot of time for other activities. Riding is the only sport she competes in.

"By the time you get through doing this," she explained, "and get home to do homework, there isn't any time to do anything else."

Taking proper care of the horses absorbs much of the time. Paula does her own grooming, "except at horse shows when I have to go from class to class."

All the time spent practicing and competing and grooming can be very discouraging, according to Paula.

"You get it (discouraged)," she said. "I think you do in every sport though — you get tired of doing the same thing over and over again."

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