

Life & Leisure

Youth will represent U.S. in South Africa

Knollwood student participating in equestrian event

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Nick Maupin, 18, will represent the United States at the 2012 Saddle Seat Equitation World Cup in South Africa, Dec. 4-8.

The former Arrowhead student, originally from Sussex, trains at Knollwood Farm in Hartland where he's won several awards.

"Sometimes a child will get in the saddle and there's something special there. Not everyone is like that. It's something inherent, like it's more than just going through the motions. Nick (Maupin) was like that. We saw it when he first started riding," Carol Matton and co-owner of Knollwood said.

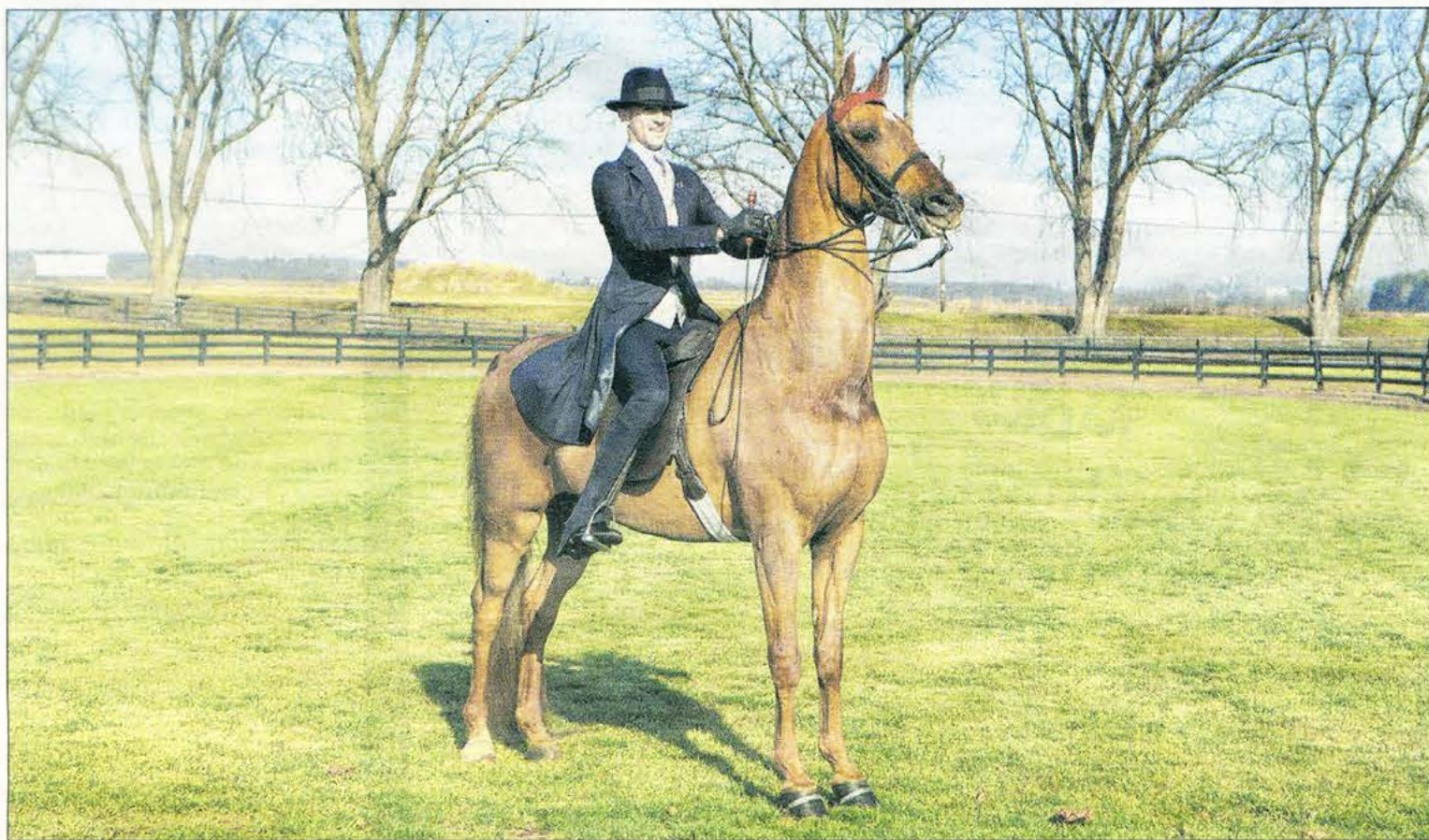
Knollwood offers riding lessons for both new and experienced riders. All the necessary equipment is available for rent. Home and away academy showing is available for those interested in riding school. Horse adoption is also an option for those who can't afford or aren't ready to buy their own horse. Their next open house will be 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 28.

Never too young to learn

Co-owner Scott Matton says that even though hunt seat, western and saddle seat are completely different, you can never be too young to learn the basics.

"We have tiny tot programs that put children as young as 3 onto horses..." Scott Matton said, "It's not about power. You will never be able to overpower a horse. So you learn finesse, focus and confidence instead."

Maupin has been training since he was 7. By winning the National Horse Show Good Hands, the United Professional Horseman's Association (UPHA) Senior Challenge Cup and the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) Medal Finals in 2010, he secured the



JENNIFER MAZZA/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Nick Maupin, 18, a saddle seat rider at Knollwood Farm in Hartland, was chosen to represent the U.S. at the Saddle Seat World Cup in South Africa. He will join 11 other Americans from Dec. 4-8 to compete on unfamiliar horses for individual scores, which ultimately accumulate toward a total team score.

Triple Crown in Saddle Seat competition.

Maupin was the first and only man to do so.

"I remember when Nick (Maupin) first came to Knollwood. He barely knew a thing about a horse or how to ride one. Yet it was obvious, after only six months, that he had unique skills and related to the horses in a special way. These days, his form, his command of horsemanship and his competitive nature are all top-notch. He is an exceptional athlete," Scott Matton said.

'Against the grain'

"I stuck with it because it was something not many others were doing, and it seemed to be a great challenge. I'm the kind of guy to go against the grain, and riding is a great example of that," Maupin said.

Now, he's bound for Pa-ry's, South Africa where he will compete in a five-gaited event with teams from five different nations. He was selected among hundreds of

other riders to join nine other people representing the American team. Another Knollwood rider, Angela Darrow, 21, from Hartland, will also be representing the U.S. at the Equitation World Cup this year.

American riders had to obtain references and submit footage that demonstrated their skills when they first applied. 32 candidates, from different ages across the country, were then selected to advance where they had to compete on unfamiliar horses. Once chosen, riders also had to raise the funds for their own travel and did so as a team, through raffles, meals, giveaways and other private donations. There are only twelve spots on the team (two alternates) and Maupin said he was extremely humbled and honored to be chosen to represent the United States.

Well prepared

The event brings athletes (14 years and older) together from five different

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Scott Matton

Co-owner of Knollwood Farm riding school talking about Nick Maupin

countries. They compete for individual scores which ultimately accumulate toward a total team score. Traveling so far with their own horses is impossible and they're supplied with thoroughbreds from the host country. Riding with unfamiliar horses will be difficult.

"Luckily my trainers have prepared me very well for this by putting me on whatever new, unfamiliar horse they can find ... Horses tend to be just about as nervous as the person on its back, so I have learned to become immediately comfortable and relaxed on almost any horse," Maupin said.

The competition consists of four segments, to be completed in two phases held on different days. Rail work, as a group, will happen on the

first day. Individual workouts will happen on another day. Maupin said that he's looking forward to more complicated patterns, because they're easier to personally focus on, but the judges may not want to assign outrageous designs and aspects as the horses may not do patterns on a regular basis.

"I feel optimistic about this year's team. We have a great group of riders on both teams, varying in ages and experiences, which will help us all build off each other. We are an aggressive group, so we should match up well with the typical South African team mentality. Two years ago we came away with one gold and one silver, and I am confident we can get the second gold this year," Maupin said.