

Super Ride V begins Wednesday

Drill team championships offer excitement and camaraderie.

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Super Ride V: The United States Equestrian Drill Championship (USEDCC) will be held June 6-9 at the Austin Arena in Myrtle Springs, near Canton, Texas. For youth competing in the junior divisions, as well as for adults in the Rodeo Speed, Gaited Horse, Theme and National Championship Open Divisions, the USEDCC offers a unique opportunity to compete on a prestigious stage, without the need for expensive horses, professional grooms or major corporate sponsorship.

Each of the 58 teams competing in Myrtle Springs has compiled hours in practice, choreography, music selection, costume design, fund raising and travel.

"It's one of the only sports where you can get six to 30 riders that are on the same team, working for the same goal," says Carmen Herrmann Stiles, a judge at the 2006 United States Equestrian Drill Championship. "For 4-H, and for the youth, isn't it better to have kids working together as a team (as) opposed to competing against each other? The camaraderie that you have in drill team is like a football team, or soccer team. You have such camaraderie with each other, you become such a family."

Based upon the fundamentals of dressage and military formations, equestrian drill is a well established tradition in many parts of the world. Prior to the mechanization of cavalry units and the transfer of U.S. equestrian sports leadership to civilian entities, drill competition was principally a military exercise. In the 1930s drill team competition was a popular feature of horse shows throughout America, including the National Capital Horse Show in Washington, D.C., and the National Horse Show held at Madison Square Garden in New York. The legendary horseman John Clarke, an officer in the 9th U.S. Cavalry, helped to train and coordinate U.S. Army drill teams that successfully competed against many of the world's best, including members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, known internationally for their famous "Musical Ride."

In the United States, the sport is today overseen by a national sanctioning body, the United States Equestrian Drill Association (USEDCA), based in Canton, Texas.

For more information, visit www.unitedstatesdrill.com.