

Riders participating in a different kind of competition

Crazy. Brave. Tenacious. Tough. Dedicated.

Those are some of the words parents and spectators used to describe the members of the Evangeline, Annapolis and West Valley Canadian Pony Clubs competing at the provincial Prince Philip Games competition held at Rohan Wood Stables in Aylesford.

The Prince Philip Games (PPG), are a series of games on horseback that resemble the moves of polo or jousting and are performed at varying levels of speed, depending on the level of competition. The games have been around since the 1950s, when Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, sought to develop an equestrian sport that differed from the more traditional competitions on horseback.

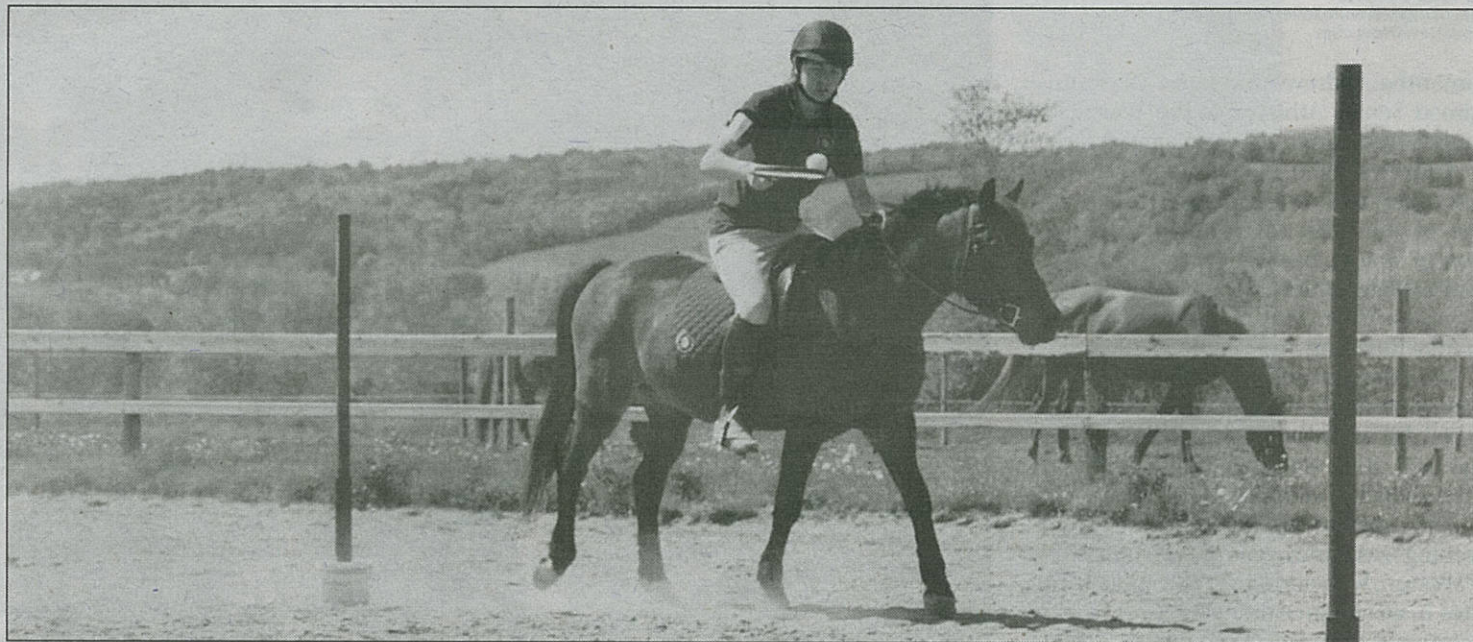
PPGs require speed, agility, eye-hand coordination, teamwork, patience - and, well, guts.

"It's so exciting to play. The riders don't realize the skills they're learning as they're playing. But it all adds up to a making them a better rider," says Jackie Allen, official steward, who brought the games to Nova Scotia in 2005.

This was the second time Rohan Woods Stables has hosted the provincial qualifier, where 45 riders competed, aged six to 18.

The youngest riders do a series of games that demonstrate the initial skills required to advance in this sport. The ponies walk or trot, led by older competitors, so the kids don't have to worry about what their pony does.

This was nine-year old Aisha Sommerfield's first PPG.



Conor Cairns playing the Ball and Racket Race at the recent Prince Philip Games, held recently at Rohan Wood Stables in Aylesford. Submitted

"The hardest part was getting on and off the horse for the Stepping Stones game. I've only had a couple of riding lessons, but this was really fun and I want to keep doing it."

The A-level and Masters teams from the Evangeline Pony Club will be representing Nova Scotia at nationals this summer.

This will be 17-year-old Ashley Spicer's second trip to nationals. For her, the sport is both about the adrenaline rush and about the quiet of the mind.

"You have to completely clear your head, be focused, patient and open mind-

ed, for yourself and for your teammates. It's such a rush. Definitely the most fun thing you can do on a horse," she said.

This was Conor Cairns' first time riding with the Masters and his second PPG. While his speed isn't at the pace of his more experienced teammates yet, his accuracy and eye-hand coordination are well developed. After a couple of out-of-control moments with his mount, he decided to take a different approach for one of his last runs, where he had to balance a tennis ball on top of the racket through the course.

"I kept thinking about the tortoise and

the hare. I was the tortoise, but I still beat my opponent the hare, who was speedier, but not as careful."

The Masters and the A teams from Evangeline Pony Club will be fundraising around the Valley this summer for their team trips to Alberta and Ontario respectfully to represent Nova Scotia at the National Prince Philip Games, 2012.

They will also be giving a PPG demonstration at Annapolis Valley Exhibition on Monday, August 13.

Submitted by Julie Glaser, parent of a member of the Evangeline Pony Club