

Mile High Vaulters New Vaulters Information



What is equestrian vaulting?

Vaulting is a unique and growing sport which combines dance and gymnastics on a moving horse. It's a wonderful way to develop coordination, balance, strength, and creativity while working in harmony with the horse.

Who can vault?

Anyone! Vaulting is not just for those who want to compete, but is for anyone to enjoy, whether as a recreational activity, a strength and conditioning sport, or for the love of competition.

Is it like trick riding or circus riding?

No. Vaulting is always done in a very controlled environment— in a fully enclosed arena in a consistent, large circle, in soft footing, with the horse attached to a "longe" line and controlled by a trainer (called a longeur). The horse, longeur and vaulter work as a team, with the longeur controlling the horse, the horse performing at a continuous gait. The vaulter performs a series of gymnastics and dance moves on the horse as it moves in its circle.

What kinds of horses are used for vaulting?

Many different breeds and sizes of horses can be used for vaulting. The best vaulting horses are calm, strong, fit and kind, with a consistent gait. Mile High has had both the tallest horse in the American Vaulting Association, Sampson, and has the daughter of the first horse ever registered with AVA, Amidala, who sports #1 when vaulting!



Who are the horses at Mile High Vaulters?

- Amidala – born in 1999, 16 hand, Percheron/Paint mare, Grey
- Bojack – born in 2012, 17.2 hand, Clydesdale, Bay
- DSF Dai's R Us – born in 2004, 14 hand, American Baskir Curly mare, Bay
- Elvis Dixieland Rock – born in 2009, 15.3 hand, KWPM/Thoroughbred mare, Bay
- Garth ISF – born in 2011, 16.3 hand Dutch Warmblood gelding, Bay
- Hampton – born in 2003, 17.3 hand, Hanoverian gelding, Bay
- Mr. Royal Darcy (aka Fitz) – born 2007, 17 hand, Hanoverian gelding, Chestnut
- Shelby – born in 2001, 16.3 hand, Percheron mare, Grey
- Xena – born in 1999, 16 hand, Oldenberg/Percheron mare, Bay
- Zoe - born in 2006, 16 hand, Percheron/QH gelding, Buckskin

Is vaulting a team or individual sport?

Both! Vaulters may participate individually, in pairs, or as part of a team. In team competition, up to three members of the team are on the horse at once, doing a variety of moves.

What if you don't own a horse?

No problem! Since vaulting is a team sport as well as an individual one, the club owns and trains most of the horses. All vaulters have the opportunity to be involved with the care of the horse, without the expense of owning one.

At what age can you start vaulting?

One of the beauties of this terrific sport is that vaulters can be pre-schoolers or adults—and any age in between! At Mile High we have classes just for Tiny Tots (ages 6 & younger) and for adults wanting to vault recreationally, and many classes for everyone at all levels of vaulting. Vaulting is a sport divided mostly by skill level, not by age, so anyone can participate.

Do I have to know how to ride a horse to begin vaulting?

No, you don't need to be able to ride to vault, but vaulting can greatly improve your riding skills.

What are some of the skills that vaulting helps develop?

- Coordination
- Balance
- Strength
- Creativity

In addition, vaulting teaches a whole set of "soft skills" that can't be overlooked—

- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Trust
- Self confidence



Is vaulting safe?

Yes. Many factors contribute to the safety of our sport including the fact that the horse is controlled at all times by an experienced, trained longeur. Vaulters are taught to condition their bodies with stretching and strengthening exercises, and are also taught safe mounts and dismounts at all levels. Also, most exercises are learned on a stationary apparatus, called a vaulting barrel, before they are performed on the horse. [Learn more about vaulting safety.](#)

What will I learn first?

Vaulting basics are first taught through the compulsory exercises, learned on the practice barrel, and then moved to the horse, first at walk, and then on to other gaits as the vaulter develops balance, coordination and strength. At Mile High Vaulters, we also believe that vaulting should also be fun, and so even new vaulters begin to develop their own freestyle, a 1 minute set of moves choreographed to music, in addition to learning the compulsories. Practices generally rotate each week from a focus on compulsories to a focus on freestyles. Conditioning is part of every practice.

What are the Compulsory moves?

The compulsories consist of the following moves for new vaulters, these are called the 1* compulsories (more advanced vaulters then move on to 2* compulsories and then 3* compulsories):

- Mount (mounts begin as assisted mounts)
- Basic Seat
- Flag
- Front Swing or “Click”
- Half Mill
- Rear Swing or “Click”
- Half Mill & Dismount

What are the Vaulting Levels?

With the exception of Tiny Tots (6 & under), all other vaulters are grouped by skill level rather than age. Vaulting is taught at the walk first, moving to trot based on the vaulter’s strength, coordination and balance. Advanced vaulters vault at the canter. The Coaches will help determine the right level for any vaulter. Competitive levels are usually organized in the following order of advancement:

- Walk (boosted mount)
- Novice/Modified Trot (boosted mount)
- Preliminary Trot (boosted mount)
- Trot (must mount by self)
- Copper (Canter level at 1* Compulsories)
- Bronze (Canter level at 1* Compulsories)
- Silver (more advanced Canter vaulters, 2* compulsories)
- Gold (Canter level at 3* Compulsories)



Adults not wanting to compete at these AVA/USEF levels may choose to vault in “Masters” classes instead, which are restricted to vaulters 18 & over.

Information about the vaulting levels and competition rules is available at <https://www.americanvaulting.org/>. More information is also available about Mile High competitions in our Competition FAQ handout.

What are the “Gaits”?

Horses are asked to carry vaulters at three different gaits. These basic gaits include:

- Walk – slowest gait. Footfall is slow, and each foot hits the ground separately creating a “4-beat” gait.
- Trot - which is slightly faster than a walk, and has a different footfall pattern, with diagonal pairs hitting the ground at the same time, causing it to be a “2-beat” gait;
- Canter - which is faster again than the trot, and the footfall pattern makes it a rolling, 3-beat gait.

What are the Barn Safety Rules that I need to know?

- Fill out and turn in a release form BEFORE getting on horses or barrels (downloadable from website)
- Do not use equipment until you have been taught how to use it and have permission from the coaches or lungers
- Obey the coaches and lungers
- No running allowed in the barn except in the vaulting circle and for warm up as directed.
- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the activity and weather
- No chewing gum or dangling jewelry while on the horses or barrels
- Pick up and dispose of any trash, even if it is not your own
- Please keep the office and bathroom doors closed



What are the expectations for practices?

- Plan to arrive on time and stay for the full practice and to help with chores
- Be ready to pitch in and help out with preparing the horses for vaulting, and taking care of the horses after practice.
- Ask questions of your coaches when terms are used that you don't understand.
- If you are not sure what you need to do next, ask a coach or one of the older, more advanced vaulters (coaches in training are usually at novice practices helping out).
- Be supportive of your team members. Use encouragement to help others when they may be having a tough time learning a new move. Then they will be there to help too!
- Be careful around the horses. Although the vaulting horses are well trained, they are still large animals. Be aware of your surroundings. Do not just "hang out" behind a horse.
- Ask the lungers, coaches or more experienced vaulters to help you at any time you are unsure of how to work with a horse or the equipment.

What should I do between practices to improve my vaulting?

- Conditioning! Push ups, hand stands, hand stand push ups against a wall, leg lifts, plank exercises, squats, holding a chair position against a wall, and any other core exercises are all helpful for your vaulting.
- Practice your freestyle to your music. You need to practice counting your moves (4 counts for any held move), and know where in the music you should be at any place in your freestyle. Although you likely won't have your own barrel at home to practice on, use a bench or even the couch to replicate your moves.

For More Information Contact:

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