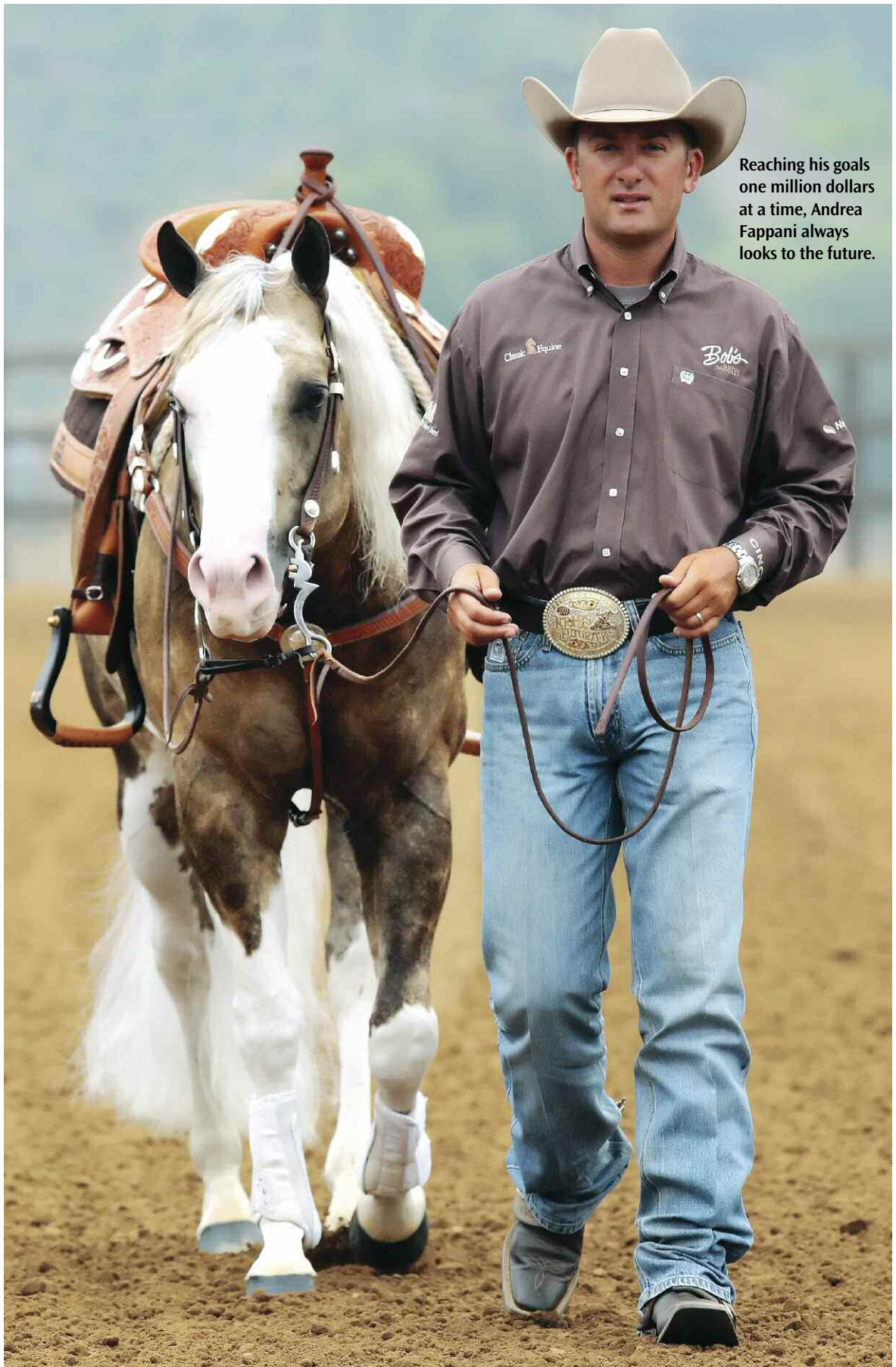


M I L L I O N D O L L A R R I D E R



Reaching his goals one million dollars at a time, Andrea Fappani always looks to the future.

ANDREA FAPPANI

BY HEATHER LOVERIDGE

AT 33, HE'S THE YOUNGEST TRAINER EVER TO REACH \$2 million in earnings. To say he's accomplished a lot in a short amount of time would be putting it mildly. For Andrea Fappani, who now joins the ranks of NRHA's over-million-dollar achievers such as Tim McQuay, Shawn Florida, and Craig Schmersal, it's been quite a ride.

In 2006, the NRHA Professional reached the first milestone, going over the million-dollar mark at the Scottsdale Classic Futurity in Scottsdale, Arizona. Just three short years later, at the same show, Fappani rode Nics Little Bud, Colonels Shining Gun, and Litn Up Conquistador to win the level 4 open championship, tie for third and place fifth—earning him more than \$24,000 and securing the last few dollars he needed make it over two million.

"It takes the same amount of work to reach each goal, but mentally the first million was much tougher. I wanted to reach that by the time I was 30 so I put a lot of pressure on myself," Fappani said. "After that I didn't think about the next million as much. I was focused on other goals like improving my showing and my business. Two million almost came naturally until last year, right at the end, when everyone started telling me how close I was. I started thinking about getting there quickly and things kinda fell apart; it was playing with my mind a little bit.

"So I tried not to think about it. In three years I went from \$1 million to \$1.94 million so what if it took a year to get the extra \$60,000? I knew I had some really nice three-year-olds so I focused on them."

Taking the pressure off himself was key. Once done, Fappani's

earnings rapidly accumulated, culminating in the Scottsdale show that put him over the mark.

"Having the clients and horses to get to \$2 million that quickly is a sure sign my business is growing strong," he said. "Now my goals have shifted a bit; it's not just about the money any more or about winning the next show—it's more about the big picture. After the first million I set a goal to have a business where I didn't depend on just one or two big clients. I wanted to be able to take care of the small guys just as much as the big guys, and that's one of the things I'm proud of in my business.

I now have about 40 clients and 50-some horses in training. Being able to keep all of them happy means they trust me and my program. Even though the economy is slow, this year we started more two-year-olds than we've ever started before."

Further proof of his clients' loyalty: in January Fappani is moving his entire program from southern California to Jim and Pat Warren's Rancho Oso Rio in Scottsdale, and every single one of his clients is staying on board.

"It's a sign to me that people trust my program and trust that we'll do a good job on their horses," he said.

Moving his entire operation wasn't a decision Fappani made lightly. Though his relationship with 23 Partnership owner Manuel Bonzano was solid, Fappani, always the long-term planner, began thinking about the future. He realized he wanted something he could commit to long-term, something that would allow his family to develop roots. He considered buying his own place in Texas and then Jim and Pat Warren came along. Originally onboard as clients, they eventually offered Fappani an opportunity he couldn't resist.

"I'm to the point now, and the two million probably played

HIS PERFECT STORM FOR
ATTAINING TWO MILLION
DOLLAR RIDER STATUS:
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"I love showing and competing," says Andrea, pictured here at the 2010 NRHA Derby on Whiz Jewels.

DAWN BASTROM

a little factor in that, to where I want to have something very stable for my family in the future," Fappani said. "I don't want to have to work and ride horses until late in my '70s just to pay the bills. I wanted to get to a point in my life where I can retire if I want to, pay for college for my kids, etc.

"When the Warrens offered a long-term commitment to manage their ranch, while still operating my business, keeping my program the same, and having the freedom to make decisions on my own, it was a win-win."

And winning is definitely something Fappani knows about. It's what drives him to excel, to keep pushing until he reaches what's become an elusive goal for every other trainer as well—replacing Three Million Dollar Rider Shawn Florida as the top dog.

"At the end of the day I want to win, and if I want to win I need to best Shawn. As much as I like him, that's what's pushing me every day—trying to figure out a way to improve my program," Fappani said. "A lot of people enjoy the daily training, and I do, too, but if I could train them (horses) at horse

shows I'd be at a show every day. I love showing and competing that much."

Along with his success, Fappani is quick to point out those that got him there—his clients and family.

"My wife Tish has been a huge part of my business, managing it and letting me do what I do best: train horses," he said. "Many people have contributed to this million. The clients are the people who really made it happen and are making it happen for the future. They're the ones who supply the horses that are winning."

ABOUT THE WRITER

Heather Loveridge is a freelance writer from Georgia with many years' experience writing feature articles for various equine publications such as the NRHA Reiner, Performance Horse, Barrel Horse News, and Tractor Supply's Out Here magazine. She's also held positions of editor, managing editor, and contributing editor for a variety of business and professional publications.