

# Don't Mess Around With Guns

Andrea Fappani pulls the trigger and wins the Open Shootout on Tinker With Guns.



With a 231.5 score in the \$100,000-Added Open Shootout at the NRHA Futurity, Tinker With Guns claimed his fourth major title in 2011 with Andrea Fappani. (Left) Whiskey N Diamonds claimed the 2011 Open Shootout Reserve Championship with his rider, Shawn Florida.

The crowd was ready to cheer from the moment the first horse walked under the “Gateway of Champions” sign leading into the Jim Norrick Coliseum in Oklahoma City.

The occasion? The National Reining Horse Association’s \$100,000-Added Open World Championship Shootout, presented by Equine Sports Medicine. The one go-round event was stacked with 38 of the world’s greatest horses and riders, all vying for the top spot.

It lived up to the “Shootout” moniker, with one high score fired after another. But when the smoke had cleared the arena, only one pair could come away with the title and accompanying check for \$31,303.

In the end, it was Andrea Fappani and Tinker With Guns who wowed the judges to the tune of a 231.5 score.

“It was a solid run tonight,” Fappani said. “He is an amazing stopper, so I always count on his stops. With a four-stop pattern like tonight, he’s always on top.”

But even with the high praise, Fappani, Scottsdale, Ariz., cautioned that Tinker With Guns has yet to perform to his utmost potential.

“This horse is special. I’m still saving him,” he said. “I know I have plus-one circles with him, but I’m not using it. I back off on the circles because I think when you push one as fast as you can go, you use up your horse. If I don’t have to use that, I don’t want to.”

The notches on Tinker With Guns’ pistol are most definitely noteworthy. In 2011, with Fappani in the saddle, he won the Level 4 Open Championships at the NRHA, Cactus Classic and Reining By The Bay derbies, plus finished third at the National Reining Breeders Classic. The pair never marked below a 227 score in finals competition in 2011.

Tinker With Guns (Colonels Smoking Gun [Gunner] x Tinker Nic x Reminic), owned by Rancho Oso Rio, where Fappani bases his Fappani Performance Horses, was trained and shown successfully by NRHA Professional Randy Paul through his 3-year-old year, but an

injury at the 2009 NRHA Futurity meant a year-long break.

“I started riding him in the fall of his 4-year-old year,” Fappani said. “It took a few months to get with him, but he’s an extremely good-minded horse, and he was broke. I just had to adapt to him. I think part of the reason he was so solid and honest this year [2011] was that he had that whole year to rest.”

Prior to the event, the 5-year-old stallion had lifetime earnings approaching \$200,000.

“We gave him about three months of rest, and then I told his owner, Pat Warren [of Rancho Oso Rio], that he was ready to go. We decided to bring him here and try to get his earnings over the \$200,000 mark,” Fappani explained. “We’re planning to hit all the big derbies [in 2012] and win as much as we can.”

With the Shootout paycheck on the books, Tinker With Guns now has \$230,070 on his **Equi-Stat** record.

**Equi-Stat Elite** \$4 Million Rider Shawn Florida, who won the Shootout Reserve Championship on Whiskey N Diamonds, noted that the Dec. 1 competition was tough.

“It was an unbelievable night. There were so many nice horses and good riders that came out to compete. It was really fun,” he said.

Florida and Whiskey N Diamonds, owned by Rhodes River Ranch/CDR Farms, marked a 229.5.

“This horse has been awesome, and he was awesome tonight,” Florida said. “He’s done nothing but win for me, and I love him to death.”

With a \$19,054 payday, Whiskey N Diamonds (Topsail Whiz x Princess In Diamonds x Shining Spark) also surpassed the \$200,000 mark in earnings to achieve a lifetime record of \$213,549.

“He was third at the NRHA Futurity, was fourth at the NRBC. He’s won a few things and is constantly a bridesmaid, but I enjoy him so much,” Florida said. “I’m not sure what is in his future. The owners will let me know, but I just hope I get to sit on his back.” —SH