

{ NON PRO }

# Cinch<sup>®</sup> NRHA Non Pro Futurity

TISH FAPPANI CLAIMS A DECISIVE VICTORY IN THE LEVEL 4 NON PRO FINALS WITH LITN UP CONQUISTADOR.

BY KELLIE CARR

**S**CORING AN IMPRESSIVE 221 TO TOP THE LEVEL 4 NON PRO division by a 6.5-point margin, Tish Fappani won her first Cinch<sup>®</sup> NRHA Non Pro Futurity title aboard Litn Up Conquistador. A strong run with smooth transitions, punctuated by huge stops, Fappani and the gelding by Conquistador Whiz out of the mare Aleena Starlight, by Million Dollar Sire Grays Starlight, were the decisive winners, which earned the pair a check worth more than \$43,000.

The title event took place December 3 as part of the 2010 NRHA Futurity Show, which was had increased entries and prize money for the sport's non pros and their three-year-old horses.

## Quirky But Nice

Tish and her husband Two Million Dollar Rider/NRHA Professional Andrea Fappani purchased the gelding in April of 2009.

"This horse has some quirks for sure, but he's a nice horse," Andrea said after the Scottsdale Classic open futurity last October.

Tish and Litn Up Conquistador showed together for the first time in late October at the California Challenge to get ready for the NRHA Futurity less than a month later.

"I just cruised him through in Burbank to get my butterflies out," Tish explained. "He's a funky horse, but he's really pulled through, so it's been fun to show him."

In the non pro futurity finals, Fappani drew up early in the go order, which didn't help her nerves, but she steeled herself to ride aggressively and put her faith in her horse.

"I was nervous because I was early, but he schooled well the night before, so I felt confident," Fappani said. "I knew I was going to have to go hard. I'm usually a little bit conservative, but I knew I had to go for it, and I just trusted him. I knew he was a big stopper. His weak spot was his turns, but I had to trust everything I had and just go for it. It felt great!"

While there were many more runs to follow, no one could touch Fappani. She was overwhelmed with her first win.

**REINER**

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Tish savors the moment with her son Luca.

DAWN BAXSTROM

ADEQUAN® NORTH AMERICAN AFFILIATE CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

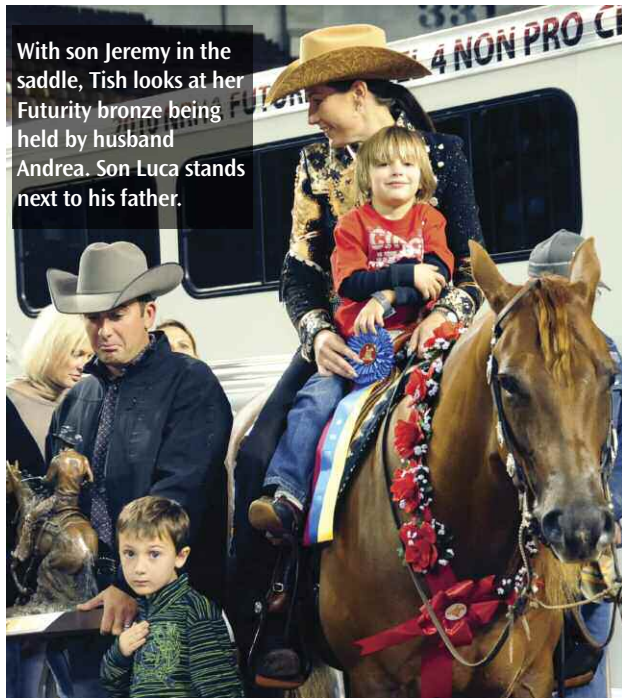


Tish Fappani's six and a half point lead in the finals left no doubt who the winner was. She piloted her Lt. Up Conquistador to the non pro title.

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With son Jeremy in the saddle, Tish looks at her Futurity bronze being held by husband Andrea. Son Luca stands next to his father.



DAWN BAXSTROM



Tish Fappani and Lt n Up Conquistador.

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WALTLENBERRY

“I’m so happy . . . I don’t think it’s sunk in yet! I’m still numb,” Fappani said excitedly as she waited for the awards to begin. “I won the intermediate non pro (level 3) a few years ago, but this is my first time to win the non pro (level 4). I wish my mom and dad were here, but they’re home watching online.”

Riding a horse with definite “quirks” made it tough for Fappani to give it her all, but she knew that’s what it would take to post a big score.

“He’s always looking around and he’s just kind of funny, so I had to pretend I didn’t know all that and just trust him to do his job,” she explained. “He did, and it worked out for us.”

### Legendary Mentors

Fappani is no stranger to the reining pen. The California native has been riding and showing horses for almost as long as she can remember.

“My mom used to train horses and teach kids when I was little. I started showing on my pony when I was three,” Fappani explained. “I showed a bunch on the West Coast, and my first trainer was Glen Gimple, who was like a grandfather to me. After he passed away, I rode with Linda Baker, another California legend.”



Magnum Chic Dream

DAWN BAXSTROM

### 2010 NRHA FUTURITY SIRE & DAM NON PRO AWARDS

NON PRO DIVISION SIRE AWARDS		
HORSE	OWNER	AWARD
1.T. Magnum Chic Dream	Viola Scott	\$2,868.63
1.T. Bueno Chexinic	Snowy Range Ranch	\$2,868.63
1.T. Bueno Chexinic	Snowy Range Ranch	\$2,868.63

NON PRO OFFSPRING AWARD		
HORSE	OWNER	AWARD
Shiny Whiz	Flis & Rich Sassella	Sire & Dam Bronze



Tish Fappani and Ltn Up Conquistador and their connections in the official win photo.

*Walt Stenberg*

WALT STENBERG



Josiane Gauthier and Timber Finest were reserve champions in the level 4 non pro.

DAVID JASPER

WALT STENBERG

taught me the basics of Reining, and I learned a lot from all of them.” It was at the 1995 NRHA Futurity that Tish met Andrea. The two began dating and eventually got married. In the meantime, Tish decided to explore a possible career as a trainer.

“Horses have always just been my life, so I thought I would try training,” Tish said. “I worked for John and Todd for a year when they were in Arizona, and then I worked for Craig Schmersal for a year. I learned a ton from him—he’s such a showman and professional. As I got older, though, I realized that training horses isn’t the life I wanted for myself.”

Tish left the training business, married Andrea, and even spent time working in retail when the couple lived in Oregon. She took the mandatory time away from the show pen and enjoyed building a family and business with Andrea. The couple has two sons: Luca, who is nearly seven and Jeremy, four. Now, as a non pro, Tish enjoys showing when she has the opportunity, but says she gets even more satisfaction from supporting her husband and managing the career of the stallion Big Chex To Cash.

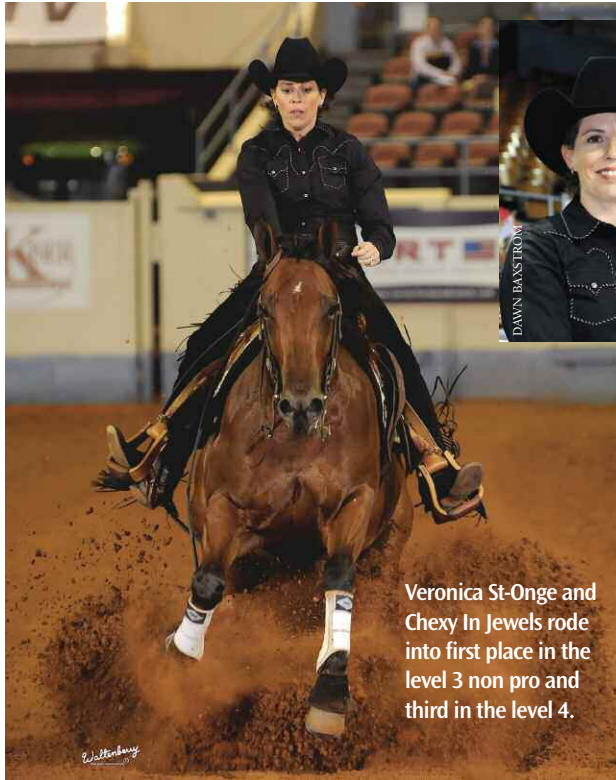
### Family Time

“I wanted to still be able to show but not have to do it full time because I enjoy being a wife and mom,” Tish explained. “I like to be there and support Andrea. The biggest thing I’ve learned in the last four years is the breeding side of the business. It’s totally different than the training end, and it’s turned out to be a huge job for me. Between Andrea, the breeding business, the



### Celebration

Million Dollar Riders were on hand to welcome their newest member to the club. NRHA Professional Todd Sommers (to the right of the painting) was recognized as the latest NRHA Million Dollar Rider.



Veronica St-Onge and Chexy In Jewels rode into first place in the level 3 non pro and third in the level 4.

WALTENBERRY

DVD sales, the ranch, it's a full-time job. I never expected to get as involved as I did, but I very much enjoy it."

The family has relocated from their home in San Marcos, California, to Jim and Pat Warren's Rancho Oso Rio in Scottsdale, Arizona. Big Chex To Cash moved to Oklahoma to stand at stud at the Hartman Equine Reproduction Center. That will take Tish out of the day-to-day breeding responsibilities, but she plans to remain involved in his management and the communications with breeders.

"Now that he's moving, I'll get to spend more time with my kids to help them with their sports activities. The boys love mo-

torcycles especially, so it'll be great to get to spend more time with them," she said. "Luca is in first grade, and I'm very excited about the school he's moving to. Jeremy is in preschool, and he loves to ride his pony, 'Buddy.'"

While she is one of the biggest links in Andrea's support team, she credited her own support team at the NRHA Futurity for helping her capture her first non pro title there.

"I'm just so lucky to have my husband who supports me so much and our entire team that helped with the horses and kids and everything," she said. "I'm really, really lucky to have so many people there. My parents couldn't make it because of my mom's health, but they were so excited and happy for me. My mom called me every five minutes for updates and she watched online. I'm so grateful for all the support I got from everyone!"

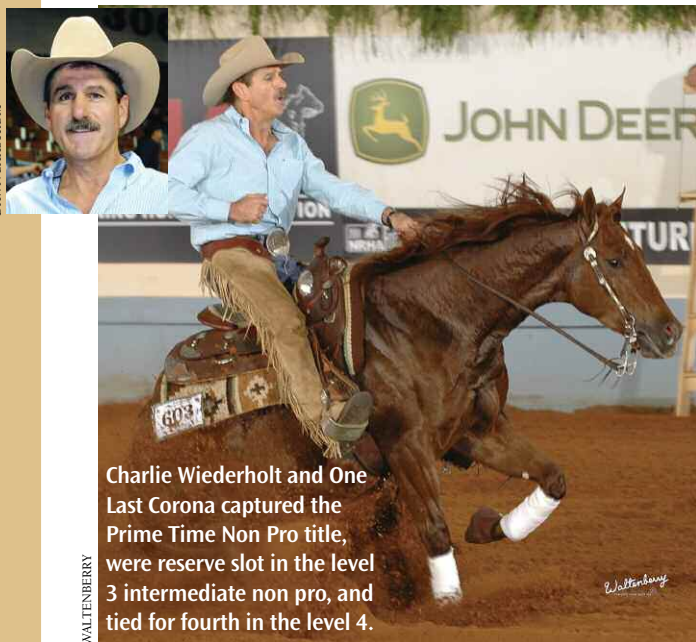
Weeks after her win, Fappani was still overwhelmed by her success at the show and thankful for all the lessons she learned early on from some of California's best trainers.

"All of the stuff I learned growing up on the West Coast really taught me a lot. I don't really care if I have one to show, but I'm competitive enough that when I have one that I know is good I try to do well," Tish explained. "It was such a shock to me to win ... I never imagined it this year. I'm still floating!"

### Gauthier Nabs Reserve

Josiane Gauthier of Lucama, North Carolina, daughter of NRHA Professional Francois Gauthier, captured the Level 4 Non Pro Futurity reserve championship title aboard Timber Finest, a gelding by Boggies Timber Jack and out of Taris Finest by Footworks Finest. The 26-year-old mother of two pocketed nearly \$34,000 for her 214.5 score.

"Boggies Timber Jack passed away a year ago and was owned by a very good client of ours," Gauthier explained. "His whole goal was to make futurity finalists. We got really lucky in June when we were able to buy him, and he's been working great for



Charlie Wiederholt and One Last Corona captured the Prime Time Non Pro title, were reserve slot in the level 3 intermediate non pro, and tied for fourth in the level 4.

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Kelle Smith and Whiz N Nicki tied for fourth in the level 4 non pro.

Ryan Humphrey and Wimpys Gold Gunner were tops in the level 2 limited non pro.

WALTENBERRY

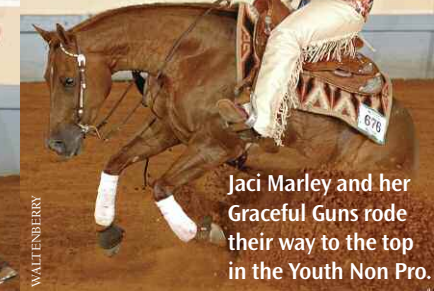
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Mike McGee and Baylite Bandit won the level 1 non pro.



Jaci Marley and her Graceful Guns rode their way to the top in the Youth Non Pro.



Ryann McKinzie and A Genuine Sport were reserve in the youth non pro.

me. I'm really excited, especially for the breeder, Dan Pike, because he really believed in him. I'm just happy to have had the chance and that Dan let me get this horse. It's all very emotional because so much work is put into this, so it was amazing."

Josiane, who works as the breeding manager for Sunny Pines Breeding Services, said her family bought the horse when he was in training with NRHA Professional Pierre-Luc Phaneuf, who used to work for Francois.

"Pierre-Luc did most of the training on him," said the Quebec, Canada, native. "He had him in Canada, and he's with Schmersal now, so when we were here for the NRHA Derby we went to try him there (Overbrook, Oklahoma). He wasn't quite enough to be an open horse, but he was perfect for me. Pierre gets them very, very broke."

In the show pen, Timber Finest lived up to his potential.

"After two weeks of being here, horses are tired," Josiane said as she gave Timber Finest a pat. "He was tired but he still gave me 100 percent. I think he did the best he could, and I'm so pleased with him. He's a huge turner and that's his big thing. His right circles were really good. In the left, he was leaning on me a little bit, but I think the stop before the last one was pretty good for him too. I'm very happy."

Gauthier said she hopes to show the horse in derbies in 2011, but she's also had a lot of reiners interested in buying him, so the future is still uncertain. One thing was for sure—she and her husband, Russell Flint, and daughters, four-year-old Allison and 19-month-old Heidi, enjoyed the big payout and the horse's success.

"I'm going to get his full brother!" said an excited Josiane.

### St-Onge Tops Level 3

Veronica St-Onge of Gainesville, Texas, piloted Chexy In Jewels to a third place finish in the Level 4 Non Pro Futurity and also captured the level 3 Non Pro division title in the process with her 214 score. The win in the level 3 division alone netted her a paycheck worth \$16,428, plus an additional \$26,701 for the third place finish in the level 4 division.

"I was just going to try to show what I have and stay out of the penalty box, but she's really laid back and she was really good and right there for me," Veronica said after the show. "She was listening to me the whole time and very quiet."

The mare is by Bueno Chexinic and out of a mare

named Hot Hollywood Jewels, by Six Million Dollar Sire and Hall of Fame member Hollywood Dun It. Hot Hollywood Jewels was owned by Veronica and her husband NRHA Professional Patrice St-Onge, and both won money in the reining pen on her.

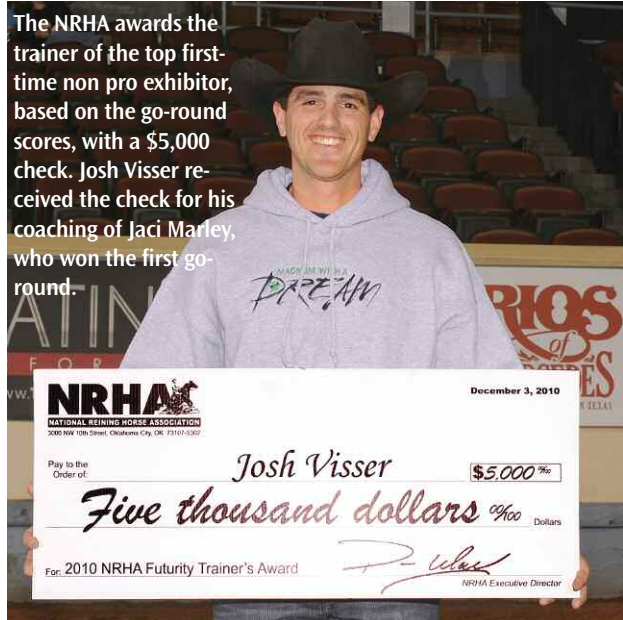
"That makes this mare even more special because we raised her," Veronica smiled. "She has been very quiet since the day she was born. Pat told me to just go out there and have fun and try not to make any silly mistakes," Veronica said of her husband's coaching tips. "That's what we did and it worked!"

The St-Onges run a full-service reining facility near Gainesville.

### Humphrey Takes Level 2 Title

Ryan Humphrey and Wimpys Golden Gunner scored a 212.5 to earn \$10,364 and top the level 2 Non Pro division. Humphrey, originally from Spokane, Washington, moved to Whitesboro, Texas, last year to open Humphrey Quarter Horses, a full-service breeding, boarding, foaling, and management ranch.

"I couldn't have been happier with her," Humphrey said of



The NRHA awards the trainer of the top first-time non pro exhibitor, based on the go-round scores, with a \$5,000 check. Josh Visser received the check for his coaching of Jaci Marley, who won the first go-round.

## TOP NON PRO FINALIST SIRES

The following stallions had three or more get in the non pro finals:

**Gunner: (5), owned by McQuay Stables, Inc., Tioga, Texas**

**Graceful Guns**, owned and ridden by Jaci Marley, Plainview, Texas

**Gunalinium**, ridden by Tricia Hamilton, owned by Todd Hamilton, Scottsdale, Arizona

**Gunners Oak**, ridden by Kim Muehlstaetter, owned by Tom Dooley, Scottsdale, Arizona

**Hidin Gunner**, ridden by Mandy McCutcheon, owned by McQuay Stables Inc.

**My Gunner Enterprise**, ridden by Mandy McCutcheon, owned by Tim McQuay

**Smart Chic Olena (4), owned by Jim Babcock, Gainesville, Texas**

**Downtown Chic**, ridden by Samantha Griffin, owned by Lance Griffin, De Winton, Alberta

**GS Smart Kitty Cat**, ridden by Sarah Johnson, owned by Lyn Johnson, Hillsborough, New Jersey

**Smart Kachina Oak**, ridden by Samantha Griffin, owned by Lance Griffin, De Winton, Alberta

**Smart Moonlight Chic**, owned and ridden by Thomas Moffit, Le Claire, Iowa

**Smart Like Juice: (4), owned by Smart Like Juice, Inc., Markham, Illinois**

**Fresh Juice**, ridden by Charles P. Wiederholt, owned by Charles/Cheryl Wiederholt, Hastings, Minnesota

**Moonshine Juice**, ridden by Jose Vazquez, owned by Smart Like Juice Inc.

**Smart Juicy Chex**, ridden by Juan Manuel Vazquez, owned by Smart Like Juice Inc.

**Whats On Juice**, ridden by Jose Vazquez, owned by Smart Like Juice Inc.

**Topsail Whiz: (4), owned by Bob Loomis Reining Horses, Marietta, Oklahoma**

**Iz A Whiz**, owned and ridden by Tricia Hamilton, Scottsdale, Arizona

**Neak**, owned and ridden by Sally Broten, River Falls, Wisconsin

**Peacemaker Whiz**, owned and ridden by Stoney Russell, Longview, Texas

**Rio Grande Whiz**, owned and ridden by Sally Broten, River Falls, Wisconsin

**Wimpys Little Step (4), owned by Xtra Quarter Horses, Purcell, Oklahoma**

**Memorable Moments**, owned and ridden by Victoria Lambert, Hempstead, Texas

**Miss Sweetie Wimpys**, owned and ridden by Debbie Ethier-Malaxnos, St. Jermone, Quebec

**Wimpys Golden Gunner**, ridden by Ryan Humphrey, owned by Dragoon Creek Quarter Horses, Whitesboro, Texas

**Wimpys Miss Jill**, owned and ridden by Rigoberto Suarez, Fredericksburg, Texas

**Little Ruf Peppy (3), owned by Lil Ruf Peppy Syndicate, Aubrey, Texas**

**Heza Ruf Hombre**, owned and ridden by Barbara Wibbels, Aubrey, Texas

**Lil Enterprise**, ridden by Emily Winegar, owned by Green Valley Ranch

**Lil Mistress**, ridden by Mandy McCutcheon, owned by Tom and Mandy McCutcheon

Wimpys Golden Gunner, a Paint Horse mare by Two Million Dollar Sire and NRHA Futurity Champion Wimpys Little Step and out of Gunner Getcha, by Two Million Dollar Sire and Hall of Fame inductee Gunner (Colonels Smoking Gun). "She's starting to come together really well. She's an honest horse, and she's got a big heart. She always wants to be there and please you. She never wants to be in trouble."

Humphrey bought the mare as a yearling and has done most of her training by himself. He counts on Arizona trainer Patrick Flaherty to help him get his horses ready for the show pen, though. The hard work paid off, as Wimpys Golden Gunner made it to the non pro finals.

"She stopped really well and had a lot of comeback in her circles," Humphrey said.

Humphrey is planning to breed the mare this spring and also continue to show her at the NRBC and the NRHA Derby.

Chad Clark of River Falls, Wisconsin, rode Pop Qwiz in the non pro finals, scoring a 209.5 to take the level 2 Non Pro Futurity reserve championship title. Clark earned \$6,218, plus a \$15,000 bonus from the Easy Otie Whiz Incentive program. The incentive paid money to the highest placing open and non pro horses that were the get of Easy Otie Whiz, owned by Bobbie Cook/OutWest Stallion Station in Scottsdale. Clark was the 2002 NRHA Non Pro Futurity Champion aboard Tootsie Pop.

"This is only the second time I've ever made the finals since 2002, when I won it on his mother Tootsie Pop," Clark laughed. "He has some similarities to her. He's a little scared of stuff sometimes, but, like all futurity horses, he's only three years old. He was really good in here. I was really afraid he was going to look around and not pay attention, but he did a good job."

While Clark does a lot of the training himself, he counts on NRHA Professional Kim Diercks for starting and coaching all the way through.

"I do most of the work on the horses by myself, but she's the coach for sure. I have to give Kim a lot of credit," Clark said. "It's a fun challenge. I try to have a futurity horse every year, and I usually have only one horse, so I have to make sure it's a really good one if I'm going to come here."

Clark said having one that he's raised be successful is a reward in itself.

"I remember him being a dopey little weanling," Clark said of Pop Qwiz. "It's really cool when you can raise one. He's a really kind horse, and it's great to have a horse that is just really nice."

## Third Time's A Charm for McGee

High school ag and FFA teacher Michael McGee first saw Reining when he was just 13 years old, and, ever since, the 25-year-old has dreamed of taking a horse to the NRHA Futurity. His dream came true in a big way when he captured the level 1 Non Pro division title aboard Baylite Bandit, a stallion by Bay Starlite and out of Peppy Nancy Lena by Cisco Lena. The pair scored a 213 to claim the championship after a run-off with level 2 winner Ryan Humphrey.

McGee made it back to the level 1 finals by the skin of his teeth, but made the most of the opportunity.

"Words can't describe how I feel," said an excited McGee after the run-off. "I was hoping to just make the finals, and I barely

made it in level 1. I didn't make the consolation round to make it in the level 2 finals, so I was just going out there to do my best. He had an awesome run, and we marked a 212.5. We had to have a run-off, so this is just dream-like."

The remarkable thing about McGee's success is that it was only his third time to ever show a reining horse. But McGee, who grew up riding pleasure horses, tried to keep focused on his goal and not let the pressure of a big show get to him too much.

"I was pretty nervous since I'd never shown in the coliseum before, and I've never shown in a show this big," McGee said after his successful run-off. "But my horse showed really well, and he was really relaxed the whole time. He has a great spin. His stops are getting really good, but really all I was worried about was myself staying on track, and not doing anything I wasn't supposed to do."

Despite not having much show experience, McGee has ridden reining horses and trained with some very talented professionals along the way.

"I spent the summers with Allen Mitchels, and I also rode with Jody and Jack Brainard and Patrice St-Onge," McGee said. "It's an awesome experience and to be here is a goal I've had for a very long time."

McGee enjoyed the challenge of training his own horse, but to get Baylite Bandit ready for the show pen, McGee turned to St-Onge.

"I've never really had a show horse before, so he really helped me get him prepped and ready to go to the Futurity," McGee explained. "I felt intimidated, but I knew that feeling wasn't going to help me. I think my desire to succeed and achieve this goal overlaid any fear that I had."

Now that he's gotten a good taste of showing in the reining pen, McGee plans to continue training and showing his non pro horses. He is planning to take Baylite Bandit to the NRHA Derby, and also hopes to have something else to show at the 2011 NRHA Futurity.

"I've got some young horses coming up that I'd like to show at the Futurity," he remarked. "I've known from the beginning that this was a special horse, so I took a gamble on it and it just worked out!"

McGee pocketed a check worth \$5,215, while Humphrey won an additional \$3,160 for the level 1 reserve championship.

### **Wiederholt Takes Prime Time and Level 3 Reserve Titles**

Charles Wiederholt and One Last Corona made the most of their trip from Hastings, Minnesota, taking home the championship and a check worth \$3,260 in the Prime Time Non Pro division, as well as earning \$13,511 for reserve in the level 3 Non Pro.

"She felt right there with me the whole while," Wiederholt said of his mare by Million Dollar Sire Magnum Chic Dream and out of Corona Nita by Corona Cody. "She never felt off a bit anywhere. She was there to show, and she was a lot of fun to show."

Wiederholt, who owns a restaurant in Minnesota, has been reining since 1983. He bought One Last Corona from NRHA Professional Dean Latimer in April and continued her training himself.

"I always do my own training, and she's a sweet mare who's been a lot of fun," Wiederholt said. "She just let me wheel her around."

Wiederholt, who says he only goes to six horse shows a year, plans to take One Last Corona to the Wimpys Little Step Derby early this spring, as well as the NRBC and the NRHA Derby. After those shows, he plans to sell the mare and get his next futurity prospect.

"I like to keep going with the younger horses, and I like futurities and the NRBC," he explained. "It's a lot of fun when they go out there and behave!"

### **Marley Wins Youth Non Pro**

Jaci Marley of Plainview, Texas, teamed up with Graceful Guns to score a 214 to win the Youth Non Pro division, putting \$450 in her checking account. The pair also earned more than \$6,200 by making the finals in all four non pro divisions and placing in the top 10 of the level 1 and level 2 Non Pro divisions. Marley bought the mare, by Gunner and out of Gracefully Dun, by Hollywood Dun It, at the 2009 NRHA/Markel Insurance Futurity Prospect Sale. "Melanie (Wilhelm) helped me find this horse last year at this sale, and then took her into her barn for her two-going-on-three-year-old year," Marley said. "Melanie got her started and she came back really soft, which is what Melanie is really good at. I've got to thank her for picking her out and having my dad actually buy her for me. The horse is amazing."

Marley, 15, now trains with NRHA Professional Josh Visser, who won the First Time Non Pro Trainer's Award. Each year, NRHA recognizes the highest-scoring first-time non pro exhibitor in the go-round with a championship buckle, which Marley won. In addition, the non pro rider's trainer receives a check for \$5,000, which went to Visser. In the finals, the teenager was smooth and steady despite her inexperience.

"She felt amazing, and she was with me the whole time," Marley said. "The circles, I ran the fastest I could on her and I had a lot of fun. I'm very proud of her. She worked amazingly hard for me and she deserves everything that comes to her."

The high school freshman has been showing reining horses for two years, and has her determined dad to thank for owning Graceful Guns.

"My dad came to the Futurity last year determined to buy a horse," she explained. "I really didn't think I was ready for a futurity horse at all. At the beginning of the year, I thought we should see what she is and, if we could get her good enough for it, I would try. Josh got her tuned up after Melanie had her and did a great job as well. I wasn't sure that I was going to be ready for this show, but I trusted Josh and his opinion, and we accomplished it. He told me to have fun...that's what it's all about. I had a blast!" ♦

#### **ABOUT THE WRITER**

*Kellie Carr grew up roping, riding, and rodeoing on her family's ranch in the Nebraska Sandhills. She now lives in Arizona and is the owner of PlusOne Productions, specializing in freelance writing, photography, web design, and marketing for equine professionals.*