

SHOT to the Top
Stock Horse of Texas Association Recognizes All Around Riders
By Jill J. Dunkel

They come for fun. They come for the camaraderie, and they come with one central goal in mind: to learn how to ride a better horse. Over 100 members of the Stock Horse of Texas Association, or SHOT, gathered in Abilene, Texas, in March for their yearly banquet, two-day clinic and horse show.

What began in 1998 as a way for every day horse enthusiasts to learn about their horses and then take that knowledge and apply it, has evolved into a strong organization with a huge following. "The basic concept is education," said founding member and Executive Secretary B.F. Yeates.

The group holds clinics paired with competitions, and features classes in western pleasure, trail, reining and working cow horse. Every class is scored according to the requirements of the class, and score sheets are posted after each class. "The scoring system is like a report card," said Kim Lindsey, SHOT board member. "You can analyze each maneuver you did, see where you excelled and see where you need to make improvements. You know what you need to go home and work on."

SHOT competitions feature three divisions, Open, Non-Pro and Novice. Sometimes a Youth division is also offered, however youth are always welcome to compete in the Novice division. "SHOT provides people a place compete on their level," said Lindsey. "It gives people a place to develop a versatile horse on their level, their own playing field."

Every year in March, competitors are recognized for their achievements at the annual membership meeting and banquet. This year, Glenn Hodges, Judy Fortenberry and Laura Taylor earned saddles for their efforts, capturing the All Around titles in the Open, Non Pro and Novice divisions, respectively.

Open High Point

Hodges, Gustine, Texas, has been involved with SHOT since 1998. "I always wanted a good horse, but couldn't afford to buy one that was already trained," he said. "So I went to this clinic to learn something." Jack Brainard, one of the founders of SHOT, was the clinician. "I learned a lot of things, especially about getting my horse softer." Brainard helped Hodges develop a daily routine to use each time he rode his horse. Hodges kept that routine on a piece of paper in his pocket for each time he rode. "I wore the paper out, but my horse was getting better."

Hodges said over the years, he's kept asking questions and has had a lot of fun along the way. "I never thought I'd ever win anything like this," he said. Hodges rode Crows TT in all four events at every show last year. The pair won the high point in Trail, Working Cow Horse and Reining, and finished second in Pleasure.

Hodges purchased Crows TT four years ago at an auction. “He’s a really nice horse, but is funny minded,” he said. “I’ve had to learn a lot of patience with him. Crows horses, they’re athletic and very physical. He’s a super little fencing horse. He does all that on his own; it’s nothing I particularly taught him.”

In addition to showing SHOT competitions, Hodges also shows in the Southwest Reined Cow Horse Association. “I show in their entry level Ranch Hand class,” he said. Last year, he finished the year in second place.

Hodges also shows in Ranch Horse Association of America (RHAA) competitions. In their event, the contestant is required to rope, stop and drag the calf at the end of the cow work. “Inconsistent roping has killed me there,” laughed Hodges.

Although he couldn’t participate at Abilene, Hodges enjoyed watching the clinic from the stands. He broke his leg earlier this year working on his barn. “I love these shows,” he said. “They are laid back and enjoyable. With four classes, if you blow one, it’s okay. Just go again next time. These are some of the friendliest people you’ll ever meet. The shows aren’t cut throat. You can show, see where you need to improve, and go home and get busy.”

Non Pro High Point

Like Hodges, Non Pro High Point winner Judy Fortenberry shows for the fun of it. “At my first SHOT show a few years ago, everybody was so helpful. It was so much fun. Everyone is willing to help you, and tell you some things you could do to improve.”

Fortenberry showed Huntin Shade, a nine-year-old gelding that she purchased as a reining futurity reject from Robert Chown. “After I bought him I didn’t hardly ride him for a few years. I had another horse I was comfortable with, but when I sold that one, it didn’t take long to figure out “Shade” was a lot better.”

The Bulverde, Texas, resident initially showed in the Novice classes before moving up to the Non Pro division in 2004. “The first show I went to I was hooked. Even though I didn’t do that great in anything, it was a lot of fun,” she said. “This past year I went to every single show. I made it a priority. Even at the last show, I didn’t have to go and would still win the All Around, but I wanted to go anyway.”

Fortenberry said one of her most gratifying accomplishments with Shade was teaching him about cattle. “I have done all of the cattle training. I’ve been to a lot of clinics and received help from a lot of people, but no one else has trained him on cattle.” In 2003, she won the Working Cow class high point in the Novice division.

She also shows in RHAA events, and occasionally goes to a Quarter Horse show to compete in the Working Cow Horse. “I’d like to see what it takes to get a horse qualified in the Amateur Working Cow class.” She’s also considering showing in the Southwest Reined Cow Horse Association.

This spring, Fortenberry's son, Ryan, showed Shade at a SHOT show in Stephenville, Texas. "He told me after he showed my horse that I needed a new one so he could have Shade," she said. That has been a consideration for Fortenberry. "I want to see if Ryan's serious about wanting to show. I might enjoy a good, young prospect to start riding for myself."

In the mean time, you can bet Fortenberry will be at most every SHOT show on the books. "I've just had so much fun," she said. Fortenberry has served on the Board of Directors, and was recently elected as Secretary/Treasurer of SHOT.

Novice High Point

For Laura Taylor, Waxahachie, Texas, showing in SHOT helped her progress to showing in national specialty events. Taylor's favorite events are Reining and Working Cow Horse, and she recently placed ninth in the World in the Non Pro Limited at the National Reined Cow Horse Association's world championships.

I've shown in SHOT events for 2 1/2 years, she said. Her trainer, Rodney Rosenauer, Burleson, Texas, introduced her to the organization. "This is where I started back showing again," she said. "I was raised up North and used to ride hunter jumpers. When my family moved back to Texas, there wasn't a lot of English events down here. So I tried western pleasure. That was too slow and boring for me, so I got a job galloping Thoroughbreds. That was a little too exciting, with some broken bones to show for it. I decided my daughter needed a mother so I quit, but always thought about getting back into horses again.

"The first person I ever saw ride a reiner was Jody Galyean, and I thought, 'If I ever get involved with horses again, that's what I want to do.'"

Taylor found her horse, El Gato Tambien over two years ago with the help of Rosenauer. "He's just a big, yellow paint horse. He's really sweet and willing to do what you ask," Taylor said.

Even though she's the only one in her family to show horses, she doesn't plan on quitting any time soon. "If it wasn't for SHOT, I wouldn't be as far as I am. I did most of the clinics last year. They really help a lot. And this atmosphere is so relaxed. I don't feel the pressure here like at an NRCHA show. When I'm at an NRCHA or NRHA show, I feel that pressure. I'm competing against all the big boys and they're there to win, so you better step up."

Put on Your Thinking Hat

Organized by the SHOT board of directors, the Abilene event encompassed all what the organization is about – educating horsemen and women on how to train and develop their own horse, and then provide a forum to test their horse in a show. When the program was developed, education and clinics were the focus. "We wanted people to be able to take a horse, regardless what level that horse was at that time, and improve him," explained former SHOT president Dennis Sigler. "We don't want people to think they have to go

out and buy a special, finished horse for this. Take the horse you've got and develop him into a more useable horse that is fun to ride and use."

This year's clinic featured trainer and AQHA-approved judge Buddy Fisher of Abilene and Tom Neel, a reining and working cow horse trainer from Millsap, Texas. Fisher focused on pleasure and trail, while Neel provided help with reining and the working cow class. Members of the SHOT board of directors also assisted with the clinic, including Kim Lindsey, Jayton, Texas, and Doug Householder and B.F. Yeates, both of Bryan, Texas.

Over 50 individuals participated in the two-day clinic. "I really like the training sessions," said Kathryn Hanks, Snyder, Texas. "They teach you things you don't know about to make your horse better."

Hanks said she comes to SHOT events for the knowledge and the people. "Everyone is very friendly, and it's a lot of fun. I don't send my horses to a trainer. I do it myself. If they don't learn it, it's because I didn't teach them," she said.

The clinic featured break-out sessions where riders could get individual help on trail obstacles, roping, cow work and reining maneuvers. Fisher discussed what he looks for in a trail and pleasure run, and offered advice to participants as they demonstrated their skills.

Riders were also able to work a cow individually under the guidance of Neel. He offered suggestions and tips that applied not only to that particular individual, but that the entire group could learn from.

Greg Ordeneaux, Richmond, Texas, is convinced the program works. "I help a lot of friends work their cows. And since I've been involved in SHOT, I've had more and more people call and ask me to help," he said. "My riding skills are better; my horses are so much better, and truly what I enjoy is that it is practical stuff. You can take these horses anywhere and pick them out. They may not be the best reiners or working cow horses, but they're gentle, they'll be broke. They're going to be good horses. I'll stick my horse up against any other horse doing real stuff, fun stuff, any day of the week."

Ordeneaux and his horse, Rubber Band Man, won the Reserve All Around title for 2004 in the novice division.

"This is an owner-oriented activity," said Yeates. "You don't have to spend a lot of money doing this. You don't have to have a specialty horse or a horse that lives at a trainer. And you don't have to meet the fashion demands in tack and clothing to show here.

"We don't want people to compare our reiners to the NRHA, or those that show in cow horse to the NRCHA," he explained. "When you see a horse come in the first class, he

will be evaluated in pleasure, you'll see him do a trail course, ride a reining pattern and handle a cow. We want to see the versatility of the horse."

The SHOT concept has taken off like wildfire. So many people are drawn to the organization and it's casual atmosphere that SHOT is considering taking the concept to a national level.

"Going national is in the works," said newly inducted SHOT president Vickie Hoggett, Bluff Dale, Texas. "We are looking at the legal aspects of going national, with regional or state clubs to work within the national organization. We started this from the ground up, and we all think it's our duty to continue and carry it through."

SHOT is also contemplating hosting a horse sale in the fall with incentives for buyers to bring their horses back to the organization and show.

Record Breaking Show

The show in Abilene last month is a testimony to the popularity of the organization. Entries for the show reached 105, which is the largest show held to date. When the dust settled, Bill Smith and his five-year-old horse he calls Nine won the Open All Around. This was Smith's second SHOT show, and he attended his first clinic.

"My wife's interested in these, and it's sure a good place for myself. I'm learning a lot," said Smith. "It's a real good place to bring a young horse and try to get him seasoned. It's not that expensive, compared to \$150 to enter most AQHA Ranch Versatility classes, and you can afford to bring a young horse here and not worry about trying to get your entry money back." Most SHOT entry fees are \$10 to \$20, depending on the class. The Open division jackpots a portion of the entry fees. Smith also said, "There's a lot of disciplines you can learn here. I like to ride an all around colt, and that's what I like to see. That's what you get here."

Trevor Garter riding Chin King was Reserve in the Open Division.

In the Non Pro, Judy Fortenberry won her second All Around of the year riding Huntin Shade. Holly Roberts was reserve with Cinamon Knot. Roberts is a member of Texas Tech's Ranch Horse Show Team. In their inaugural year, the team will compete at three SHOT shows this spring. The team was developed as a way to promote the university and agriculture.

Mary Dodson and her horse, Megalena Freckles, topped all of the other Novice competitors to win the All Around. Stefani Wagley with Scolders Nelly Six was Reserve.

Hoggett doesn't see things slowing down for SHOT. "I think this is so popular because it promotes the Western heritage, and we have a low key, family atmosphere. People cheer each other on whether they beat that individual or not. People just have a blast."