

Battle In The Saddle

TEAM USA DETERMINED AT ADEQUAN®/
USEF OPEN REINING CHAMPIONSHIP.

BY KATIE HENDRICKSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY K.C. MONTGOMERY

THE INAUGURAL BATTLE IN THE SADDLE, hosted by the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and Oklahoma State Fair Park, finished on a high note Saturday, July 10, as reiners competed for the 2010 Adequan®/United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) Open Reining Championship. This year, the championship was also the official USEF Selection Trial, with the top four horse-and-rider combinations (plus one alternate) earning a highly-coveted spot on the Adequan® USA Reining Team and the opportunity to represent the United States at the 2010 Alltech® FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) this September at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington.

Medal-worthy

The two go-round format placed riders based on their composite score, making both scores equally crucial to the final standings. Saturday night's finals go-round featured the top 15 horse-and-rider pairs from the first go-round. And the final three draws proved to be the best of the evening—Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medal-worthy performances.

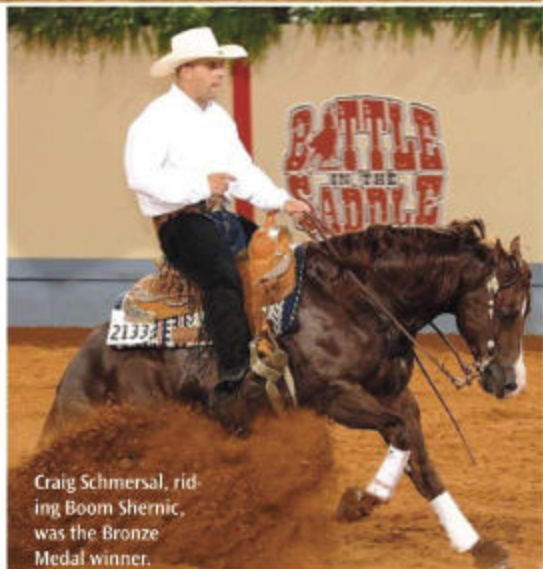
Three Million Dollar Rider Shawn Florida, Springfield, Ohio, and Buffalo Ranch's stallion RC Fancy Step led the charge from beginning to end. After posting a 223.5 to gain the first go-round lead, Florida entered as draw 13 and took the lead again. RC Fancy Step performed a physical pattern—stopping and running hard



Shawn Florida and RC Fancy Step claimed victory in the USEF selection trial.



Tom McCutcheon and Gunners Special Nite won the Silver Medal.



Craig Schmersal, riding Boom Shernic, was the Bronze Medal winner.

to score a 223. Their composite score of 446.5 earned them the Gold Medal and a ticket to WEG.

Next in the draw was Million Dollar Rider Tom McCutcheon aboard Gunners Special Nite, owned by Turnabout Farm Inc. The duo was sitting in fourth place after a go-round score of 220.5. Their amped-up finals performance earned the highest score of the event—a 225. With a 445.5 composite, McCutcheon took home the Silver Medal and a spot on Team USA.

"This was my first serious run with him," said McCutcheon of Aubrey, Texas. "Marcy Ver Meer did a great job on him. I just had to learn some of his buttons. My only concern was what he'd be like under fire. He was everything that I could hope for." Last in the finals draw was a serious contender—Boom Shernic with Two Million Dollar Rider Craig Schmersal of

Battle In The Saddle

The Battle In The Saddle was also host to a variety of reining activities including the World's Greatest Horseman Shootout, an AQHA Youth World Cup reining clinic, and two full slates of NRHA-approved classes.

The World's Greatest Horseman Shootout featured eight riders, two each representing the NRHA, National Cutting Horse Association, American Rope Horse Futurity Association, and AQHA's ranch remuda group.

NRHA Professionals Todd Wright of Newcastle, Oklahoma, and Doug Milholland of Iowa Park, Texas, represented the NRHA well in the Shootout, which featured reining, cutting, steer stopping and working cow horse competitions.

Wright earned second in the overall standings aboard Mambo Number Shine, a seven-year-old gelding owned by Anita Horn. The duo won the reining portion of the Shootout.

Milholland finished in fourth place with Starlight, a 14-year-old stallion owned by WT Waggoner Estate. Milholland placed second in the cutting portion.

J.D. Yates of Pueblo, Colorado rode Nelle Murphy's 16-year-old gelding Bald N Shiney to the championship. Along with the title, he won a paid entry to the 2011 World's Greatest Horseman competition.

During the AQHYA Youth World Cup, also held at the Battle in the Saddle, youth reiners were treated to a reining clinic featuring Casey Hinton and Three Million Dollar Rider Shawn Florida. The NRHA Professionals gave the AQHYA reiners advice and a rundown of the pattern the youth would perform in the Youth World Cup competition.

Overbrook, Oklahoma, at the reins. The pair was in second after their first go-round score of 221. They put together another stylish run to receive a 223 (444 composite), the Bronze Medal and a position on the team.

"He's been a special horse for me all along and a consistent player in every major event," said Schmersal of the stallion owned by the Boom Shernic Syndicate.

Tim McQuay rode David J. Silva Sr's stallion Hollywoodstinsteltown to fourth place. After posting a 219.5 in the first-go round, McQuay came back stronger in the finals to earn a 224 (443.5 composite) and the final slot on Team USA.

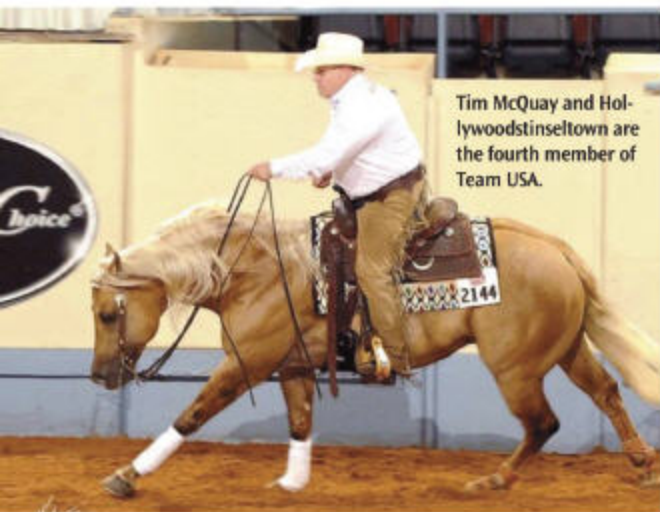
Even though he's an NRHA Two Million Dollar Rider, Million Dollar Owner and Hall of Fame inductee, McQuay, Tioga, Texas, admitted he was scared going into the event. "I'm older than these guys so I may not get the opportunity to compete in another event like this. It definitely meant a lot to me."

His daughter Million Dollar Rider and the NRHA's leading money-earning non pro Mandy McCutcheon chimed in from the background: "That's what he said last time!" The "last time" Mandy referred to was the 2006 WEG in Aachen, Germany, where McQuay was a member of the Gold Medal Team USA and the Individual Silver Medalist.

Casey Deary and Rootin Tootin Dunit, owned by Wolf Stern Partnership, earned the alternate position for Team USA. The duo scored a composite 441 (first go: 218.5 and finals go: 222) during the qualifying competition.

"Dream Team"

The atmosphere in the post-competition press conference was laced with excitement and a mix of relief yet, anticipation. Little time was spent reviewing the competition. Team USA and



Tim McQuay and Hollywoodstinstown are the fourth member of Team USA.

their Chef d'Equipe, Jeff Petska of Whitesboro, Texas, were already focused on the challenge ahead—the Games.

"Everything from here on out is geared toward giving us the best chance to win a Gold Medal," said Petska. "That's what makes it so special. All year long we're individuals and when those guys stepped off the podium, I said 'We're not individuals anymore. We're a team.' That's the great thing about (WEG)."

When it comes to their game plan, it was unanimous that Team USA will rely on experience and horsepower.

"All of us have been there before—in high-pressure situations," said Florida. "There isn't one of these guys up here that you wouldn't want to go to bat for you."

"I think we've put together a dream team," McQuay agreed.

In addition to McQuay's 2006 WEG medals, Florida, McCutcheon, and Schmersal were all members of the 2002 WEG Gold Medal-winning team in Jerez, Spain. In the individual competition, Florida captured the Gold and McCutcheon the Silver.

Altogether, these NRHA Professionals have nearly \$10 million in NRHA earnings. "These guys have won enough money



Casey Deary, riding Rootin Tootin Dunit, is Team USA's alternate.

to put a dent in the national debt," joked Petska. "The horsepower is amazing on this team. Like Shawn said—if it got to the position where any one of these guys had to walk in and put up a big score for us to win, I think we're all confident that they can do it. The more pressure, the more I'm comfortable that we'll be able to step up."

"Horsepower"

Although there's no substitute for experience, it doesn't hurt to have a little horsepower behind it. Team USA has a line-up of proven reining horses. They are perennial finalists in major NRHA events with combined earnings of nearly \$1 million.

"We have some serious horses on the team," commented Schmersal. "In previous years, we've had one, maybe two really nice horses, but now we have four horses here that have been major players in our major events. It really is a dream team when you think about it."

Florida will be aboard Buffalo Ranch's RC Fancy Step (Wimpys Little Step x Sonita Wilson). The six-year-old stallion has over \$337,265 in NRHA Lifetime Earnings and won the 2009 NRHA Derby and 2007 All American Quarter Horse Congress Reining Futurity, all with Florida at the reins. "He was good as a three-year-old and has gotten a little better every year," said Florida. "He's consistent. With this team that's so important."

McCutcheon's ride, Gunners Special Nite (Gunner x Mifs Doll), has over \$190,000 in earnings and won the 2007 NRHA Futurity level 4 open reserve championship plus the level 3 open championship. The six-year-old stallion was purchased by Turnabout Farm this past May with the intent of competing at WEG. "I'm blessed to have owners who get horses like that for me," said McCutcheon. "When we had the opportunity to get him—we bought him that very day. I've always

USEF OPEN REINING CHAMPIONSHIPS

OPEN			
	HORSE	RIDER	OWNER/LOCATION
Gold	RC Fancy Step	Shawn Florida	Buffalo Ranch/Fort Worth, TX
Silver	Gunners Special Nite	Tom McCutcheon	Turnabout Farms, Inc./ Gloucester, MA
Bronze	Boom Shernic	Craig Schmersal	Boom Shernic Syndicate/ Overbrook, OK

*Team USA, **Team USA Alternate

USEF SELECTION TRIAL

OPEN			
	HORSE	RIDER	OWNER/LOCATION
*1.	RC Fancy Step	Shawn Florida	Buffalo Ranch/Fort Worth, TX
*2.	Gunners Special Nite	Tom McCutcheon	Turnabout Farms, Inc./ Gloucester, MA
*3.	Boom Shernic	Craig Schmersal	Boom Shernic Syndicate/ Overbrook, OK
*4.T.	Hollywoodstinstown	Tim McQuay	David J. Silva/Tolland, CT
4.T.	Mister Montana Nic	Craig Schmersal	Mister Montana Nic Syndicate/ Stilwell, KS
6.	Custom Legend	Andrea Fappani	Steve Simon/Marietta, OK
7.	Wimpys Little Chic	Shawn Florida	Arcese Quarter Horses, USA/ Weatherford, TX
**8.	Rootin Tootin Dunit	Casey Deary	Wolf Stem Partnership/Denison, TX
9.	Einsteins Revolution	Andrea Fappani	Wagner & Vandorp/Aubrey, TX
10.	Smokekelan	Randy Paul	Jill Smiekel George/ Incline Village, NV



Jordan and Taylor Larson's son Cash with Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association world champion roping legend Fred Whitfield.

TAYLOR LARSON

loved that horse. He's a superstar and a lot of fun. He makes me look like I know what I'm doing."

Schmersal and his mount Boom Shernic (Boomernic x She And Chic Dunit) have posted major scores this year—a 228 to win the National Reining Breeders Classic (NRBC) level 4 open championship and a 234 to win the NRHA Derby level 4 open reserve championship. The six-year-old stallion is owned by the Boom Shernic Syndicate and has over \$275,000 in NRHA earnings.

For this event, McQuay took back the reins of Hollywoodstinseltown (Hollywood Dun It x Miss Tinseltown) from his assistant trainer Marco Ricotta. "I let Marco show him, and they've gotten along great. There's no question he's my strongest horse to come here on. I wanted to make the team, so I stole him back," McQuay laughed.

The six-year-old stallion has over \$169,000 in NRHA earnings, including level 3 intermediate open championship titles at the 2009 NRHA Derby and NRBC with Ricotta. "Hollywoodstinseltown has been with me his whole life," said McQuay. "He's really a part of my life—as a son of Hollywood Dun It. It makes me really proud to be able to take him to the WEG and show him off."

As alternates, Casey Deary and Rootin Tootin Dunit (Gallo Del Cielo x This Is How Its Dun) will be prepared to step in at any moment. The six-year-old stallion, owned by Wolf Stern Partnership, has nearly \$60,000 in NRHA earnings and was the 2008 NRHA Derby level 3 open champion. "He's a really nice horse and very talented. This was important to me ... and it's a great opportunity to have a week-long clinic with these guys," said Deary.

Team USA acknowledges that Reining will reach a new level of competition in Lexington, Kentucky, and they're geared up to rise to the occasion.

"With Reining being the only home-grown sport at the WEG, I expect the place to be rocking," said Petska. "Our guys are ready to rise to the occasion, but I'm sure every other country is coming with their guns loaded. The level of competition, the depth and quality of the horses and riders will definitely be extremely high."

For more information on Reining competition at the WEG visit alltechfeigames.com and read all about it in this issue in "The Games: Sizing Up The Competition." You can also catch the action on NBC Sports, which will provide televised coverage during three weekends across the 16 days of the Games. NBC Sports will also provide mobile and live streaming of the event online. Visit nbcsports.com for more details. ♦

ABOUT THE WRITER

Katie Hendrickson is the NRHA Reiner's Assistant Editor.



Team USA: (left to right) Tim McQuay, Craig Schmersal, Casey Deary, Shawn Florida, Tom McCutcheon.