



ISSUE: JANUARY 1, 2021

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GUNNER BECOMES NRHA'S ALL-TIME LEADING SIRE

When Andrea Fappani won the 2020 National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Open Level (L) 4 Futurity on All Bettss Are Off (Gunner x Wimpys Little Chic), the historic \$250,000 first place check catapulted legendary sire Gunner to the top spot of both the NRHA All-Time Leading Sire and 2020 NRHA Leading Sire lists. Seven years after his death, the NRHA Hall of Fame inductee's move to over \$12.6 million in sire earnings exemplifies total domination in the reining world.

It was twenty-four years ago when Gunner, then an unknown floppy-eared sorrel with a white tail, was guided into the Jim Norick Coliseum in Oklahoma City by NRHA Professional Clint Haverly to compete at the 1996 NRHA Futurity. By the time the go-rounds were over, he had grabbed everyone's



attention by claiming the Open L4 Futurity Reserve title and the hearts of reining fans everywhere.

By Colonefourfreckle and out of Katie Gun, Gunner's excessive white spots kept him from registering with the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA). He was initially registered Colonels Smokingun with the American Paint Horse Association (APHA). Bred by Eric Storey, Gunner was purchased by Pam and Paul Rohus, who took the colt to Haverly. With Haverly at the reins, he also won the Open Reining Futurity at the APHA World Championships. Gunner was then sold to Kim and Debra Sloan, and won another APHA World Championship, finished as Reserve Champion at the National Reining Breeders Classic (NRBC), and won a gold medal for the United

States Equestrian Team with the late Bryant Pace.

In a time before live-streamed video, it was easy to tell when Gunner was about to go. The stands would fill, a buzz would build, and the anticipation became palpable. The cheering started as he moved into sight—long before he ever reached the arena gate. Haverty, in typical understated fashion, noted then, “They love Gunner, don’t they?”

He was right. Horsemen and horsewomen everywhere loved Gunner and they exalted in the charisma and excitement he brought to the show pen. All totaled, Gunner earned \$173,000 and was immortalized as a Breyer model horse in the early 2000s, but that was only a small part of the legacy he was beginning to create.

His impact upon the APHA world was landmark, not only in his exemplary performance in APHA competition but in how he carried the paint horse name, presence and look to other venues and agendas. APHA Executive Director Billy Smith said, “The APHA would not have had the high-quality reining horses we have today if not for Gunner. His impact and legacy are incalculable at this point because he is that once-in-a-lifetime individual that was not only able to produce great performers, but also to produce sons that throw great performers. That has created an exponential impact that literally changed the industry.”

Ultimately his footprint grew even larger. When the AQHA changed their registration requirements in 2004, Gunner registered as Colonels Smoking Gun and began to rewrite the record books for yet another association.

Gunner was purchased by NRHA Hall of Famers Tim and Colleen McQuay in 2005, following the passing of their stallion NRHA Five Million Dollar Sire Hollywood Dun It. The McQuays had followed Gunner’s career and even hoped to buy him as a 3-year-old. Tim had ridden several Gunner colts, which cemented his decision to buy the horse. “I loved him when he was showing, but what got me going was that we had some colts of his to ride, and I liked them a lot. Stopping was easy for them and they did it with style. They always let you train them, and then they got better and better and better,” McQuay said.

Although Gunner was laid to rest in 2013, his legacy continues to grow. First becoming an NRHA Million Dollar Sire in 2007, he became a Two Million Dollar Sire just three years later. Since then, his offspring have earned a million dollars annually, subsequently moving Gunner to a new milestone each year. He crossed the \$12 Million Dollar threshold in September of 2020 and his 959 foals now have average earnings of \$13,183.

Gunner’s top earning offspring include:

- Tinker With Guns (out of Tinker Nic): \$344,000

NRHA LTE

- Gunners Tinseltown (out of Miss Tinseltown): \$305,000 NRHA LTE
- Americasnextgunmodel (out of Cee Dun It Do It) \$289,486 NRHA LTE
- All Betts Are Off (out of Wimpys Little Chic): \$281,000 NRHA LTE
- NRHA Four Million Dollar Sire Gunners Special Nite (out of Mifs Doll): \$219,000 NRHA LTE
- NRHA Four Million Dollar Sire Gunnatrashya (out of Natrasha): \$218,000 NRHA LTE
- No Smoking Required (out of Icing Required): \$185,000 NRHA LTE

NRHA incoming President Rick Clark has owned both sons and daughters of Gunner and is quick to credit his impact on the industry and to applaud the management of his breeding career by the McQuays. “We may never have a sire like him come along again for many, many years. They guided his path so well. Losing him was a setback but we are all thankful they had the foresight to make it so that he’s still part of the industry. It’s amazing, really. Gunner has made a lot of people happy. Everyone’s happy when they have a Gunner baby!”

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If you are moved by this message and want to let Jason know or have questions about your own journey, contact him via email at jasonvanlandingham@hotmail.com.

2020 NRHA MARKEL INSURANCE FUTURITY SALES REVIEW

Like many things in 2020, the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Markel Futurity Sales looked a little different this year. In the past, the sales have been held in the sale pavilion in Barn 3 and spread out over several days. This year, four sales were held



back-to-back on Dec. 3 in the Barn 6 arena.

sellers. "I think they had it set up good. They didn't really

"I personally liked having it all the same day," said Cooper Smith, who purchased a top seller and consigned two top sellers. "I think they had it set up good. They didn't really



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have a lot showing today, and I think the guys had a fair opportunity to be able to look at the horses. Yeah, it's a long day, but you kind of got it one and done and out of the way. It was good for everybody."

A great absence was felt during the sales this year, as Doug Carpenter, a member of the sale committee, passed

away from Covid-19 in November shortly before the Futurity began. Markel Insurance's Frank Costantini spoke a few words in Carpenter's memory, followed by a moment of silence. According to Gary Carpenter, Commissioner of the NRHA, though Carpenter was a member of the committee and had been the chair in the past, "he was so much more than that," and he will be greatly missed.

Futurity Prospect Sale

The Futurity Prospect Sale kicked off by selling donated breedings to 12 stallions to benefit the National Reining Horse Youth Association (NRHyA), and the fundraiser collected \$16,100. The top-selling breeding was Spooks Gotta Whiz, which sold for \$3,700.

Thirty-one horses were consigned to the Futurity Prospect Sale, and it was hip no. 1018, Colonel Chic Gun, who sold for \$65,000 as the highest seller.

Consigned by G Reining Horses/Giada Camparsi, Colonel Chic Gun is sired by Colonels Shining Gun by Million Dollar Chic out of Smart Chic Olena. The 2018 sorrel colt was purchased by Smith for a client of his. Smith said they liked the stallion because he checked all of their boxes.

"He's colored up, he's a stud, he's been started the right way and he's by a good horse and out of a good mare," Smith said. "If you write down what you want to buy, he's what you want to buy."

Colonel Chic Gun spent 330 days in training with Giada Camparsi prior to the sale. He is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program, the NRHA Euro Nomination Program and the National Reining Breeders Classic (NRBC).

Colonel Chic Gun's sire, Colonels Shining Gun, is an earner of \$112,239. His dam, Million Dollar Chic, is an NRHA money-earner whose oldest foal is 3 years old. She is a full sister to Mr Millionnic Chic, an earner of \$24,838 in Australia, and to Mexico Reining Horse Association Derby Non Pro Champion Chics Millionnic. Million Dollar Chic's

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grand-dam is Mollie Montana, who produced Mister Montana Nic, an earner of \$183,354 and 63 American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) points.

“Giada has done a great job with that horse,” Smith said of Colonel Chic Gun. “He’s going to go on and get showed probably in the Non Pro and maybe even the Open next year.”

Charleston LK, hip 1006, was the second-highest seller after bringing a bid of \$62,000 from Rick Clark. The 2018 palomino colt was consigned by St-Onge Reining Horses/Danny Hostetler and had been in training with St-Onge Reining Horses for 330 days by sale time. The colt is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program, the NRHA Euro Nomination Program and the NRBC.

Charleston LK is by Gunnatrashya, the 2009 NRHA Futurity Open Level (L)4 Champion and 2010 NRHA Derby Open L4 Champion. Gunnatrashya is a 2 Million Sire and has produced two NRHA Futurity Open champions.

Charleston LK’s dam, Jacs Shining Fancy (by Shining Spark), is a Rocky Mountain Reining Horse Association



Summer Slide Futurity Co-Reserve Champion and has produced nine money-earners, including Wimpys Shining Jac, an earner of \$12,000, and Classic Crome, who has accumulated 355 AQHA points.

The hammer fell at \$55,000 for third-highest seller Spookgotitsmokn, a 2018 dun colt consigned by Randle Tune and Sergio Elia. Teresa Wynn purchased hip 1028, who had been in training with Mirjam Stillo for 330 days

by sale time.

Spookgotitsmokn is by Spooks Gotta Whiz, the 2010 NRHA Futurity Level 4 Open Champion, 2012 NRHA Derby Open L4 Champion and 2012 NRBC Open L4 Champion. He is the first foal out of his dam, Hollywood Dun Gunnit (by Colonels Smoking Gun), who is a full sister to Hollywood Gun Dunit, an earner of \$34,000, and half-sister to Big Sky Whizard, an NRHA Open World Champion and earner of \$65,000. His grand-dam is Isle Bea Dun It, an NRHA Novice Horse Open World Champion.

The 2-year-old colt is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program and the NRBC.

Select Yearling Sale

There were 121 colts and fillies consigned to the Select Yearling Sale, and the top seller, Starjac Enterprise, came toward the end as hip no. 2119. Consigned by Toyon Ranch LLC, the 2019 red dun colt was purchased for \$88,000 in a partnership between Rick Clark, Tim Anderson and Oded Fein.

“What I like about this horse is his dam, Starjac Miss, is the dam of Platinum Vintage and also a couple other horses,” Anderson said. “I really love the mare cross, and so I decided to take a chance on the cross with the Voodoo [Shiners Voodoo Dr] because I have one by A Sparkling Vintage already.”

By Shiners Voodoo Dr, who won \$87,098 and was an Open finalist at the 2010 NRHA Futurity, Starjac Enterprise is out of Starjac Miss (by Hollywood Jac 86), whose foals



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have earned \$448,000. She is the dam of Platinum Vintage, who won \$248,000 and was the 2015 NRHA Derby Open L4 Champion. She also produced Vintage Glamour, an earner of \$60,454.

Starjac Enterprise is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program, the NRHA Euro Nomination Program and the NRBC.

“Oded, Rick and I are all good friends, and we decided that we wanted to buy one of the better horses we saw going through the Yearling Sale,” Anderson added of the partnership he formed with Clark and Fein. “I’d been watching this horse since last spring, and so I told Oded and Rick they needed to check this horse out. We went ahead and did it and they agreed, so we’re happy as a partnership. The horse will be going to Andrea Fappani.”

Anderson was also the buyer of the second-highest seller,

Vintage Ebony, a 2019 sorrel colt. Hip no. 2095, Vintage Ebony brought \$75,000 for consigner Sterling Ranch.

The colt is out of Ebony Spook (by Smart Spook), an earner of \$160,000 who is the daughter of Ebony Whiz. Ebony Whiz produced 10 money-earners, including NRHA World Champion The Shiny Whiz. Vintage Ebony is by A Sparkling Vintage, earner of \$53,000. He is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program, the NRHA Euro Nomination Program and the NRBC.

With a bid of \$71,000, Rick Clark bought the third-highest seller, hip no. 2109. Spook Electric, a half-brother to Vintage Ebony, was also consigned by Sterling Ranch and is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program, the NRHA Euro Nomination Program and the NRBC. The 2019 sorrel colt is by Jacs Electric Spark, an earner of \$85,000.

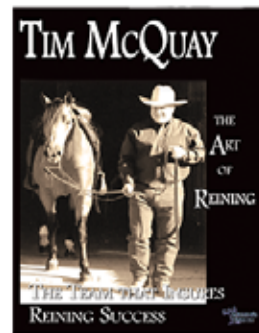
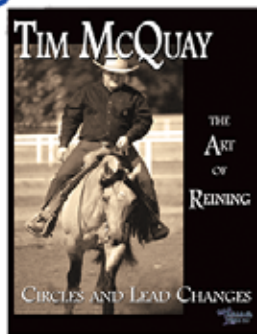
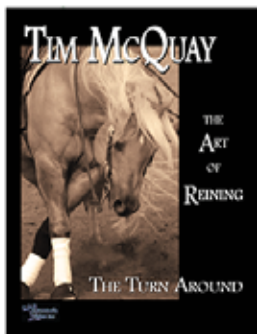
Select Breeders Sale

Twenty-one horses walked through the ring during the Select Breeders Sale, and it was hip no. 3016, Im Gunna Shine, who sold for a sale-topping \$95,000. Consigned by Cooper Smith, Im Gunna Shine was purchased by Onofre

Gomez, of California, who has always dreamed of owning a direct son of Colonels Smoking Gun.

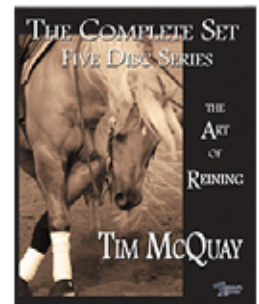
“We liked just everything from his bloodlines, his color

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\$11,971 earner Shina Gun.

Im Gunna Shine is 5-panel N/N. He is the sire of four AQHA-registered foals from two crops, including Gunna Twist N Shine, a finalist in all levels of the Southwest Reining Horse Association Futurity Non Pro.

Following right behind Im Gunna Shine as hip no. 3017 was a foal in utero selling for \$45,000 to Richard Vernon. Consigned by Toyon Ranch, the 2021 foal is by Colonels Smoking Gun and out of Icing Required (by Smart Chic Olena), who was the No. 1 leading reining producer in 2019. Icing Required's foals have earned \$504,000, including the foal in utero's full sibling No Smoking Required, who was the 2019 Run For A Million Co-Champion and is the No. 1 all-time highest-earning reining stallion.

and his conformation, to the way he is dispositioned," Gomez said. "He'll probably be a pleasure horse for a while for my daughters and I, and we might start breeding him here in the next coming years."

The 2010 double-bred palomino stallion is an NRHA earner of \$36,073, collecting paychecks almost every year since 2013. By Colonels Smoking Gun and out of the Shining Spark mare Shiner Light, he is a full brother to two other money-earners: Palomino Horse Breeders Association World Champion Youth Reining Horse Guns A Shining, and

A 2020 palomino filly also consigned by Toyon Ranch brought the third-highest bid of \$40,000, selling to Story Book Stables. By Colonels Smoking Gun, the filly is out of Dun Its Deja Vu (by Hollywood Dun It), making her a full sister to NRBC Open L3 Champion Gunner Dun It Again, an earner of \$113,000.

Dun Its Deja Vu has produced 14 money-earners, totaling \$244,000. Her 2020 filly is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program and the NRBC, and the seller offered to add the NRHA Euro Nomination Program at the buyer's request.

Marketplace Sale

The Marketplace Sale rounded out a full day of sales at the NRHA Futurity. Hip 4021, Shiners Topgun, sold for the highest amount during the sale, bringing a bid of \$69,000 from Rhodes River Ranch for consignor Smith.

Rhodes River Ranch sold the 2019 sorrel colt (by Colonels Shining Gun) to Smith as a foal, and trainer Sean McBurney was excited to have him back in their program. He particularly likes the colt's dam, The Prima Ballerina (by Topsail Whiz).



only rode her like three times, but she felt really nice."

The Prima Ballerina earned more than \$34,000 and was Reserve Champion in the Wild Card Reining Challenge Non Pro Stakes in 2017. McBurney's goal with her colt is to try to expand Rhodes River Ranch's business.

"He just seemed like a nice colt," McBurney said. "He's a very smooth-muscled colt. His conformation,

I think, is really good. I think he's a spectacular individual."

"She was a super nice mare to ride," McBurney said. "I

Hip 4051, Buzz Liteyear (Wimpys Little Step x Moonstone Mega x Marthas Mega Jac), brought the second-high-

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est bid when the hammer fell at \$50,000. Cade McCutcheon bought the 2019 buckskin colt, who was also consigned by Smith.

Buzz Liteyear is a brother to NRBC Derby Open finalist Wimpys Mega Step, an earner of \$68,000. His dam is an earner of \$53,000. The colt is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program and the NRBC.

Two horses brought the third-highest bid of \$31,000. The first, hip 4029, was SS Diggin For Chex (Pale Face Dunnit x Chexynic x Boomernic), a 2019 sorrel colt consigned by Heritage Farms, an agent for Korey Wright.

Jimmy and Nancy Nichols purchased the colt, whose great grand-dam is Santalina Command. She earned \$10,000 and produced four money-earners, including AQHA Reserve High Point Junior Reining Champion Peppy N Company. SS Diggin For Chex is enrolled in the NRHA Nomination Program and the NRBC.

The second colt to bring a \$31,000 bid was hip 4039, SS The Wimp Doctor, another 2019 sorrel colt consigned by Heritage Farms as an agent for Tyler O'Neal. SS The Wimp Doctor (Shiners Voodoo Dr x Hermosa Wimpy x Wimpys Little Step) is a brother to Xtra Handsome Shiner, a finalist in the NRHA Futurity Open L3. He is enrolled in both the NRHA Nomination Program and the NRBC.

AQHA WAIVES TRADITIONAL QUALIFYING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE 2021 AQHA VRH WORLD, AQHA RHC FINALS AND FORD YOUTH WORLD

After careful discussions with the AQHA Show Council, AQHA Affiliate Advisory Board, affiliates and advisers; an extensive comparison of qualifying data; and evaluating the potential continued effects of the pandemic, the AQHA Executive Committee has waived the traditional qualification requirements for the 2021 AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse World Championships and AQHA Ranching Heritage Challenge Finals, slated for June 22-27, 2021, at the Lazy E Arena in Guthrie, Oklahoma; and the 2021 Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show, tentatively scheduled for July 28 - August 8 at the OKC Fairgrounds in Oklahoma City.

In September, the AQHA Executive Committee made the decision to move forward with traditional qualifying requirements for the 2021 AQHA championship shows. Since that announcement, the Executive Committee, AQHA staff and Show Council have continued to monitor the situation for each championship show to determine if modifications need to be made due to the pandemic.

Read more information regarding the 2021 AQHA VRH World and AQHA RHC Finals decision. AQHA alliance partner the National Ranch and Stock Horse Alliance also made the decision to waive qualifying requirements for the 2021 NRSHA National Championships, which is held in conjunction with the AQHA VRH World.

View the data that was reviewed for the 2021 Ford Youth

World decision. AQHA has established two options to compete at the 2021 Ford Youth World. AQHYA exhibitors will have the choice to nationally qualify by the end of the qualifying period, April 30, 2021, or will be required to meet state/provincial affiliate requirements. Affiliates will not have a cap on the total number of entries per class or for the show. Youth should contact their youth adviser for more details on their local affiliate's entry requirements. The entry process for the 2021 Ford Youth World will remain with the youth advisers as it has been in previous years.

The worldwide pandemic continues to impact the lives of our members and has restricted the qualifying opportunities for several AQHA VRH World, AQHA RHC Finals, NRSHA National Championships and Ford Youth World exhibitors.

We know that waiving traditional qualifying impacts our affiliates, and AQHA appreciates their input and their understanding as we make these calculated decisions during this unprecedented time. We encourage members to continue to compete at events that are held in accordance with local, state and federal mandates and hosted safely by AQHA affiliates. For upcoming events, view the AQHA Show Calendar.

The AQHA Executive Committee, Show Council and staff will continue to monitor and review the qualifying data for the remaining 2021 AQHA championship shows. The

THE ROLLBACK

Take a step back in time with THE ROLLBACK! Each issue features a bit of reining history through articles WorldWide Slide owner Cheryl Magoteaux Cody has written covering the events, the people, the skills and the art of reining. It's a chance to remember when...

This article featuring Doug Milholland was printed in the April 1997 issue of *Western Horseman*.

DOUG MILHOLLAND


—By Cheryl Magoteaux

Mental conditioning for the futurity prospect.

FOR DOUG Milholland, preparing a prospect for the National Reining Horse Association Futurity involves not only physical conditioning and training, but also carefully developing mental strength in the young horse. His goal—a talented athlete with a great mind—has been reached many times with horses who have won futurity and world titles.

In Milholland's program, attention to the horse's mental attitude begins on day one and continues throughout the horse's career. To build a strong mental athlete, Doug puts enough pressure on the horse to challenge him, then reassures him to rebuild his confidence when the pressure becomes too much.

Evaluating the horse's mental attitude is a part of every day's training session. If a horse is interested, alert, and seems to understand everything that Doug's asking him to do, then



Doug Milholland and Silver Anniversary.

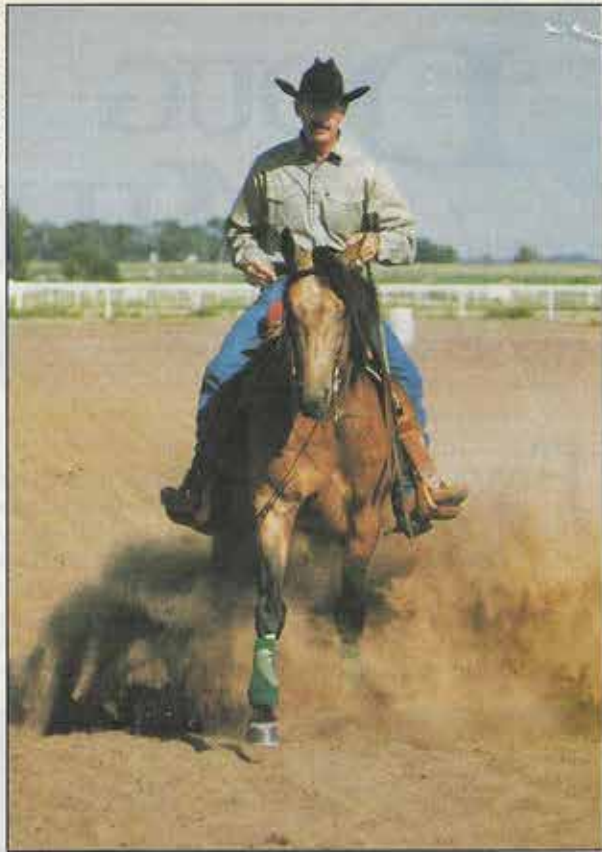
WESTERN HORSEMAN • APRIL 1997 45

Only with good preparation, both physical and mental, can a young horse make fast, smooth turnarounds. Commandalena appears at ease in his work, as indicated by the loose reins.

Milholland prepares young horses to deliver the long sliding stops by challenging a horse gradually throughout the training program. He's shown here on Commandalena, a 1993 buckskin owned by David Zimmerman of American Falls, Idaho.



CHERYL MAGOTEAUX



Doug goes forward with the training program. If an animal is showing signs of stress, burnout, or confusion, then Doug lets the horse regain his mental composure by rest or by

review of easier tasks or skills he has already mastered.

There are also times when Doug challenges the horse mentally. Doug might push the upper limits by asking

for faster turnarounds, longer slides, or more speed. Then he takes the stress off by going back to the comfort zone and asking for skills and a pace the horse has already mastered. Each

DOUG MILHOLLAND

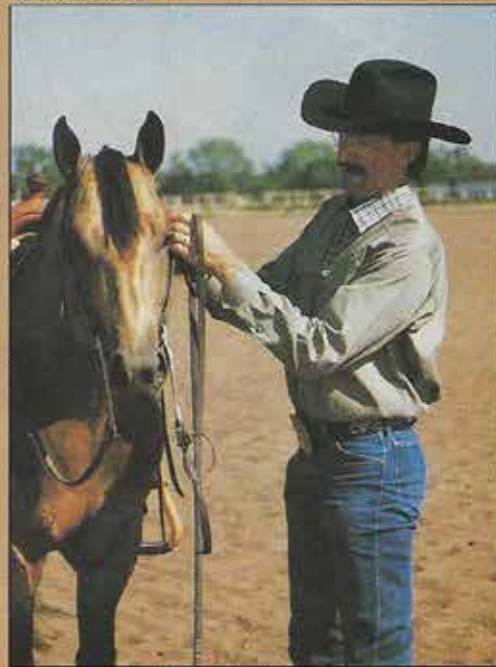
Doug Milholland was born in western Colorado, growing up on a ranch where he broke and trained colts from the age of 10. By the time Doug was 14 years old, he had begun to train for other ranches. His business thrived, but it was when he turned his efforts to a specialty in reining that he began to make waves in the horse industry. From his facility in Kearney, Neb., Milholland emerged as one of the reining world's most successful competitors.

He has won a \$100,000 paycheck for winning the NRHA Futurity in 1990 and has finished in the reserve spot in that prestigious event three times. He owns four AQHA world championships—in junior and senior reining as well as the working cow horse event.

As if that weren't enough, the man has rhythm! He has won both the All American Quarter Horse Congress and NRHA Futurity freestyle reining classes. In 1996, he had the honor of being invited to the Summer Olympics to demonstrate the reining event.

Doug, his wife, Valerie, and their children, Jamie, Brook, and Luke, have lived in Purcell, Okla., since late 1994.

CHERYL MAGOTEAUX



Doug Milholland.



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time this process is completed, those upper limits become higher. Through repetition of the process, the horse becomes comfortable with handling more pressure.

Questions and Answers

So how do you know when the horse is stressed?

Milholland recommends watching for changes in behavior that indicate a need for rest. Be aware when a horse who's normally glad to see people pins his ears when he's approached in his stall or when he's saddled. Notice when a normally quiet horse becomes nervous and jittery. Stiffness or resistance during riding is the most common indication of stress. Be aware of these behaviors and learn to recognize them as soon as they appear.

"Your job as a trainer," said Milholland, "is to use your horsemanship skills to read your horse. You'll want to evaluate his response and ask yourself what that response really means."

Is the stiffness you are feeling normal for him? Is this his natural reaction?

"Some horses are just naturally a little stiff," Milholland explained. They don't get quite as soft as others. The positive side of this option is that a stiffer horse can often be a big stopper."

Is the stiffness indicating confusion?

"If the horse has been soft but gets stiff, he may be confused or not clear on something you're trying to show him. Try to pinpoint the problem and more clearly communicate with him."

Is this stiffness indicating an injury? Is he protecting himself? Could he have an abscess developing or a strain or sprain?

For example, when Doug begins to teach a 2-year-old the spin or turn-around, "he doesn't know anything. You've done a circle, and he's soft from side to side. And you've positioned him in a small circle and asked him to stop, step around in a quarter-turn, then make a half turn. The colt wants to be resistant and doesn't know what you're after and he's never done it before. So, when he comes to the point of resisting and doesn't understand, you have to decide what course of action is best for him. Do you forge ahead and make him and try to create an open door, or do you go back and review basics?"

Doug continued, "You have to have enough confidence in yourself as a trainer to know what call to make, based on the horse and your knowledge of him. If he's just a little resistant because he's intimidated by

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something new, you'll want to go ahead and make him perform, and when he does the right thing, give him instant release from pressure."

He emphasized, "Remember, if you never put any pressure on them, 99 percent won't do any more than what you expect or demand."

Change and Challenge

Doug uses these principles of reading the colt, challenging him, and reassuring him throughout his training, but at no time are they more important than during that critical 3-year-old year.

"By the end of his 2-year-old year, the colt should understand and be able to perform all the maneuvers in a nice, slow manner. He should be sliding 6 to 10 feet consistently and be making an occasional lead change. Everything is just really soft, slow, and correct. He'll be doing everything I'll ask of a 3-year-old, but on a very primary level, and he's doing it in a snaffle."

The 3-year-old year is a year of refinement and one of the first challenges is changing to the curb bit. "I'll push to get the maneuvers mastered in the Billy Allen bit, which is my transition bit of choice. Then I'll

make the change to a curb."

Another change is location. "To begin to season him, I'll work him away from home—at another farm or neighbor's or at a horse show—to expose him to strange surroundings."

According to Doug, some horses are more fractious or nervous and the seasoning may take longer. That may make them better show horses. It's rare when more seasoning doesn't take care of this problem.

"A horse who acts really quiet can fool you. He may be calm because nothing has ever made him uncomfortable or intimidated him," the trainer explained. Milholland's goal during the seasoning process is to expose a horse to whatever might be scary to him so he can learn to deal with that situation.

Ideally, Doug challenges a horse enough to teach him to depend on the rider for security. In a finished horse, confidence in the rider should override any outside influences like noise, strange objects, unusual lighting or dirt, or whatever. To be a successful show horse, the animal must learn to focus on the rider.

Throughout Doug's training regime he continues to challenge the horse

with new skill levels, new expectations, new speed, and new outside influences, but he always follows them with reassurance. "Expose him to something new; then let him get used to it."

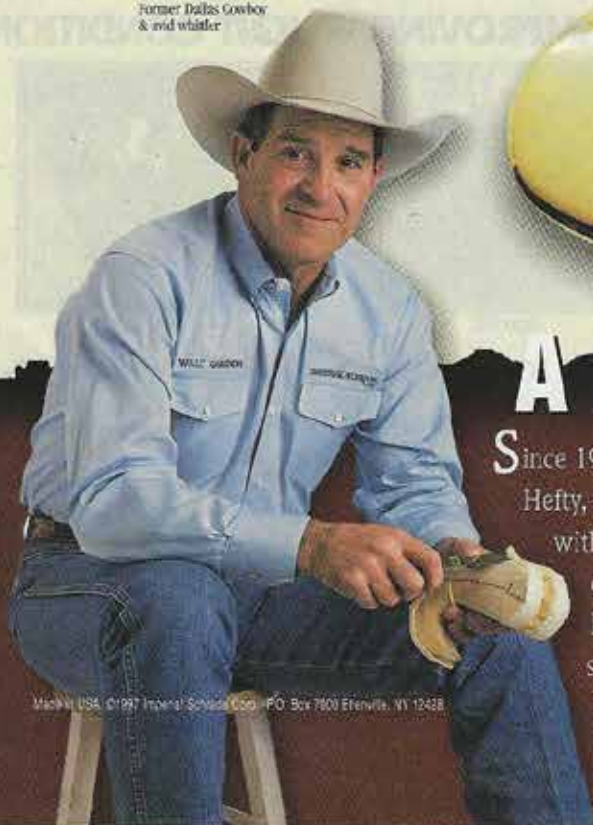
Workouts and exercise become varied. Milholland explained, "Some days I'll go out and take a slow, gradual workout. Some days the entire session will focus on a single skill we need to work on. Sometimes I'll just do a short warm-up, then go into speed control on circles while the horse is fresh."

Varying the routine by challenging the horse to work correctly while fresh reduces everyday boredom and helps create a mentally sound equine athlete. It also can be a saving precaution for show-ring contingencies.

One year at the NRHA Futurity, there were, inexplicably, 10 scratches right before Doug's turn to work. That made a difference of nearly an hour in when he would compete. "I didn't even get to lope a circle; I had to go right in and show." Doug had his highest mark of that futurity on that horse, who finished fifth overall.

Sometimes rest can be the best thing for a 3-year-old. "There are

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times when you need to back off and let the horse freshen up. Sometimes I'll just back off on the level of intensity of their training—like going back and reviewing basics and simple maneuvers that they've already mastered. Other times I'll just go on trail rides to freshen them, or just do conditioning-type loping. Sometimes I'll give the horse complete physical rest by not riding for a few weeks."

Remember, a rest can help a horse progress mentally, but it is a physical rest too. When you begin to ride a horse after a rest, give him time to regain his physical level. Don't ask too much too quick, or he can hurt himself. However long the horse was rested (up to about 6 weeks) determines about how long it will take to get him back into shape.

Limitations

Part of maximizing the horse's abilities comes with understanding his limitations. Some horses are just mentally young for their age. That immature individual might make a great performance horse as a 4- or 5-year-old if he's not asked to do too much as a 3-year-old. On the other hand, some horses who mature early enough

to be great 3-year-olds, don't go on to be good open horses.

The horse's mental capacity may have a lot to do with how he's made physically. Some just grow too fast as a 3-year-old to keep up with their bodies, but will be great horses later. Certain families of horses mature earlier or later.

A common mistake of many riders is to ride by the calendar. "You go somewhere to work a horse and see other trainers with their horses and think 'My horse is green compared to these,'" said Milholland. "Maybe he is, but he's the horse you're riding. Stay with your program and he'll have the best chance of rising to the level of the competition. If you change and try to rush him, you'll likely lose what you had."

It's also important to realize that a horse can't maintain a peak level of performance for a long time. "I'll try to bring the horse up and peak him for a show, then back off and let him down. Then I can bring him back up and peak him again."

Doug cautions riders to be sparing with their mounts' top efforts. "If you've got a great horse who's capable of winning the big ones, save him for

the events. Don't go to every show. No matter how good he is, if you show him too much or too many times at a show, you'll decrease his level of performance."

Although there are always exceptions, Doug has also found that individual bloodlines can translate to distinct physical or learning patterns. Knowing his horse's pedigree helps him plan his training, based on his experience with other horses who are bred similarly.

Tuning In

The trainer's responsibility doesn't end with trying to make the horse as mentally strong as possible. When it comes time to show, the rider has to be tuned in to his horse.

In the high-pressure finals of the NRHA Futurity, the week's stress on both the horse and rider takes a vicious toll, and rider errors are numerous. The riders have lost sleep and are dull mentally. The lights are on 24 hours a day, and the horses don't have the sharpness and level of response they had early in the week, or it's harder to maintain. If the horse reacts negatively to the stress, he'll be hard to ride. Even if the horse handles the

something to be proud of.

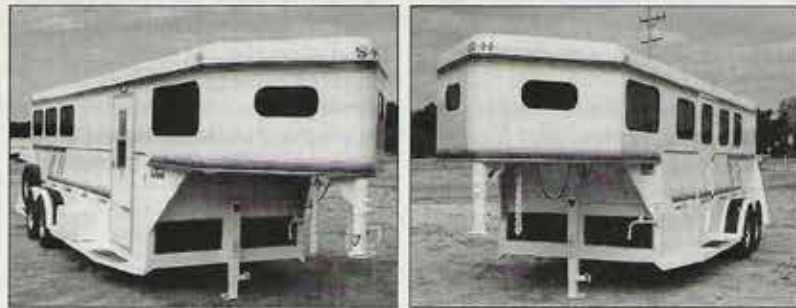
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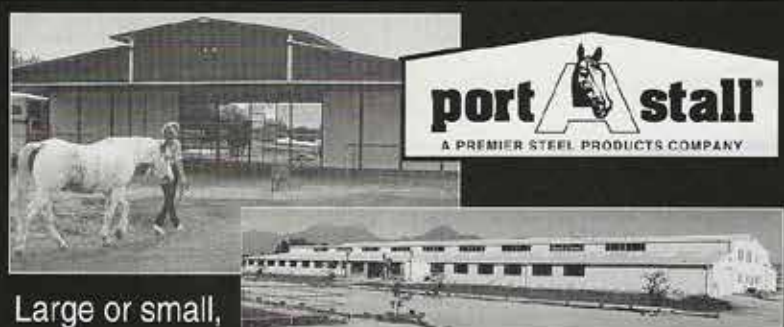


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pressure, his fatigue can make him hard to read.

Under those circumstances it can be extremely difficult to correctly assess that altered horse, so the trainer attempts to duplicate the first or second go and tries to get his entry prepared the same way. Mistakes abound.

A trainer's attention to the horse's personality and mental makeup can help him avoid those mistakes. In 1990, Doug and Silver Anniversary earned a "last chance" ticket to the finals of the NRHA Futurity when they won the consolation the night before. That's a mental boost and handicap all at the same time. While the other finals horses had been resting, Doug and Silver had to make an extra run to win their finals berth.

Even with a more fatigued horse, Doug felt he had a chance. Knowing the mare inside and out, he realized her first maneuvers were always best. "If I had a problem and drilled on it, the next day it would be correct." Considering that and the fact that he'd run the consolation the night before to make the finals, Doug only allowed himself a 5-minute warm-up although the natural temptation is to review, review—in order to be perfect for the finals.

"I loped, then walked her, then went in and asked her for her life. I had to trust her and trust my knowledge of her," he said.

Doug's understanding of his horse and his well-founded trust earned them the futurity championship and a \$100,000 check. They made history as the only pair to ever win the event as a consolation entry.

Cheryl Magoteaux is a frequent contributor to the magazine. She and her husband live in Byars, Okla., and the couple conduct roping and barrel racing clinics.



LOOKING FORWARD TO THESE UPCOMING 2021 NRHA EVENTS

1/01 - 1/03	Arizona National Livestock Show (2021 Show Year)	Scottsdale	AZ	USA
1/09 - 1/10	SFRHA All Sand No Snow Slide	Tampa	FL	USA
01/18 - 1/23	SCRHA 2020 Champion Show	Sydney	NS	AUS
1/28 - 1/31	Winter Slide	Ardmore	OK	USA
1/29 - 1/31	Heart Of Dixie Southern Slide(T)	Perry	GA	USA
2/06 - 2/07	SFRHA Super Bowl Slide	Tampa	FL	USA
2/12 - 2/22	ARHA Futurity - Half Arabian	Scottsdale	AZ	USA
2/12 - 2/22	ARHA Futurity - Purebred Arabian	Scottsdale	AZ	USA
2/18 - 2/19	Dixie National Quarter Horse Show(T)	Jackson	MS	USA
3/03 - 3/07	Oklahoma Ride & Slide(T)	Tulsa	OK	USA
3/05 - 3/08	West Coast Reining Horse Association Affiliate #1(T)	Corning	CA	USA
3/17 - 3/21	Cactus Reining Classic(T)	Scottsdale	AZ	USA
03/18 - 3/18	Winter Blast(T)	Louis	MO	USA
03/22 - 3/28	Florida Reining Classic(T)	Jacksonville	FL	USA
3/26 - 3/28	History & Champions	Ardmore	OK	USA
4/03 - 4/04	SFRHA Spring Break Slide	Tampa	FL	USA
5/08 - 5/09	SFRHA Cinco De Mayo Slide	Tampa	FL	USA
6/12 - 6/13	SFRHA Welcome to Summer Slide	Miami	FL	USA
7/26 - 7/31	Tuse Euro Slide & NRHA European Championship(T)	Regstrup		DNK
9/06 - 9/12	Belgium Futurity Show(T)	Koningshooiky		BEL
9/15 - 9/19	Matzendorf Reining Masters 2021 (T)	Matzendorf		CHE
10/09 - 10/10	SFRHA Spooky Slide	Tampa	FL	USA