

For Immediate Release

Cox Wins Second Consecutive Road to the Horse Championship Title

Chris Cox captured back-to-back championships with his win on March 2, at the 2008 Road to the Horse colt-starting competition in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Cox defended his 2007 title by besting clinicians Ken McNabb, Tommy Garland and Mike Kevil the extremely close two-day competition.

“It was quite a challenge for me this year because I didn’t pick a colt I thought I could win on,” says Cox. “I really had to make the best of what I had. This event is a real education for the crowd and shows that if you’re consistent and persistent with your methods you can be effective, even with a tough horse.”

Working before an enthusiastic crowd at the Tennessee Miller Coliseum, each competitor faced the challenge of starting an untrained three-year-old Quarter Horse colt from the Wood Ranch of Heber Springs, Arkansas. By the end of the event, the horses were not only being ridden, but were working and negotiating an obstacle course to the delight of spectators.

During the first day of round pen time, which totals an hour and twenty minutes, the clinicians are required to give their colts a total of ten minutes of break time. When his colt was caught up in a bucking and kicking-out reaction during a canter at the end of his first round pen time, Cox faced a difficult choice; help his horse through the difficulty and face a penalty, or adhere to the rules and make the horse's life more difficult on day two.

His decision cost him ten precious minutes at the beginning of day two during which he had to sit watching as the other clinicians resumed their training.

“I think if I’d gotten off in the middle it would have taken 30 to 40 minutes to correct it the next day, so I rode through it,” Cox explains. “I had to make a professional horsemanship decision to help the colt through the problem and take the penalty.”

The colt Cox chose this year, even though it hooked up much quicker than last year's horse, proved to be much more of a challenge. "It didn't have as good a mind as the horse last year," Cox says. And it was clear to see for those who are familiar with Cox as he works. This horse required more convincing.

There was a moment of heart-in-your-throat for Cox fans near the beginning of his obstacle course run when his horse pulled free as he was bridling him. The colt raced to the gate end of the arena. It came on the heels of Mike Kevil's horse doing a similar stunt

at the end of his freestyle. Kevil opted to have the gates open to let his horse through. Cox took the opportunity to show his colt had really bonded with him by walking to the gate, giving the colt a little pressure with his gaze and body posture, and getting the colt to follow him away from the gate to be bridled.

After that, his colt willingly moved through the obstacle course, hesitating a bit only before the raised pole, but then jumped it nicely. In signature Cox fashion, he did nothing "fancy" (if you don't count the flying lead changes), but rather stuck to rollbacks, loping on a loose rein, stopping and backing for his freestyle show.

"I'm honored to be part of such a great event," says Cox. "I went up against some great competitors. The competition was very tight. Everyone was effective and did a good job with their horses. People watching this event should realize that these horses aren't 'trained' in two days. We're just laying a foundation and getting them started."

Cox took home a cash prize of \$10,000 and his designated charity, the Imus Cattle Ranch for Kids with Cancer, received \$15,000 from Qwest and Fort Dodge Animal Health.

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