

walked down to the herd more times than she can remember. She has won numerous titles, such as, PCCHA Year-End \$50,000 Amateur Reserve Champion, 2007 NCHA \$50,000 Amateur World Show Champion and 2009 PCCHA Limited Non-Pro Derby Co-Reserve Champion.

To Booth the best thing about cutting “is the thrill of each run. Each time you go to the herd it’s different. Two and a half minutes could result in a smile of satisfaction or a frown of disappointment. No matter what the result may be, I want to do it again, but better!”

Non-Pro Classic/Challenge Champion: Cats Gotta Diamond and Jill Long

This year’s Non-Pro Classic/Challenge champion is Jill Long riding her homegrown stallion Cats Gotta Diamond. He is by Highbrow Cat and out of Diamond J Starlight, who Long won the NCHA Super Stakes Classic/Challenge Non-Pro on.

Even though he is only six years old he has already earned just under \$150,000 and won many impressive events. As a three year old he was 8th at the NCHA Open Futurity, then went on to become the PCCHA Non-Pro Derby Champion and make many aged event finals in both the Open and Non-Pro division.

“He is very smart and strong. He is also a wonderful kind animal,” comments Long.

Long raced ahead of the competition early on this year, so when Cats Gotta Diamond suffered an unexpected injury this spring, Long managed to maintain her lead for the rest of the year. Though she did not haul all summer she still remembers her favorite show.

“The best show of the year on Cats was El Rancho in April. He was great everyday,” says Long.

Even when Cats had to stay home Long still went to every show with her husband, Tom Long, as he hauled to win the \$10,000 Novice title and be top ten on three other horses, including Cats.

Over the past years, Long has had great success herself. With earnings over \$475,000 and numerous Non-Pro titles, including NCHA SuperStakes 5/6 Champion, NCHA Derby 5/6 Reserve Champion, and many championships on the West Coast.

“I like the competition, as well as the friendships made. I got involved prior to meeting Tom, and obviously my love for the sport as well as being a trainer’s wife is what keeps me going,” says Long.

\$50,000 Amateur Champion: Roger Booth

Seasoned cutter, Roger Booth, has been cutting since the 1980’s and has over \$113,000 in lifetime earnings. He spent this year dominating the \$50,000 Amateur class aboard his horse Magnalight. He finished the year not only the PCCHA Champion, but also the NCHA World Champion with a \$12,000 lead over second. Roger’s decision to haul was a family one.

“My decision to haul was based on my wife and sons. They told me it is a once in a lifetime event. I had heard that many times from people who hauled, so I went with it,” says Booth.

Booth made most of his runs with his Gray Starlight gelding, Magnalight. Magnalight is no newcomer to the experience of going down the road. Among his many accomplishments, he has been a Reserve World Champion five times in his long career. The Booth family purchased Magnalight in 2006 at the Western Bloodstock sale in Ft. Worth, Texas. The official purchase was actually done by Booth’s youngest son Matt.

“Matt was the one that spotted him and said, ‘Dad I want to buy that horse’. I told him to bid on him and he

purchased himself a new pony. The best thing about Magnalight is he has a big heart. When you cut clean the game is on, and he tries hard every time,” Booth says.

While Booth did well at numerous competitions his favorite show was in Ft. Klamath, Oregon because of the beautiful country and great cattle.

Booth laughs when he remembers one incident in Oregon, “I drew up last in the last set of forty three horses. I was sitting in the stands watching cattle, writing them down as they were worked, when Tim Smith walked up and sat down. He asked, ‘Where did you draw?’ I told him I was last. He said, ‘You’ll do well, like a thief in the night.’...I marked a 76 and won that day. Tim commented again as he rode out of the pen, ‘Like a thief in the night. Good job!’ I replied with ‘I learned from the best!’ and he just smiled.”

As most competitors do, Booth went through a slight dry spell during the summer. “Beyond midseason, not winning as much as I did in the beginning, I started to feel like I was losing ground with NCHA. We went to McArthur and I showed, marking a 72. Jason (Haefner) came over to me not looking happy, and I knew I was going to get a talking to. He told me that, ‘I needed to show like a champion, and that arena was my arena. Attitude is as much a part of cutting as is a good horse.’ Well, the rest of the show I was either first, or second and won the circuit,” says Booth.

Booth’s final words of the year to all cutters are, “To the haulers of the past, I appreciate your accomplishment, and to the haulers of the future, have fun, the ride is fantastic!”

\$20,000 Non-Pro Champion: Amanda Bettencourt

Winning a weekend year-end championship is a dream come true for Amanda Bettencourt. While she had success in the aged event scene, prior to this year she had never won a class at a NCHA weekend show. She started the year off with a bang and never looked back, becoming the PCCHA Rookie of the Year and \$20,000 Non-Pro Champion.

“In December, 2008, I showed at Redwood Empire, in Santa Rosa. It was an unbelievable show. I had never won a class at a NCHA weekend show, and that weekend I did. I showed four times, won three classes, and got second in the other. This show planted the seed that I could compete at the NCHA level,” explains Bettencourt.

Bettencourt accredits a lot of her success to her 2002 gelding Royal Fletch gelding, Play Royal, “I would say the best thing about him, is his stop and that he is so gritty. The tougher the cattle, the better he is. I think that’s why I did so good in the used cattle classes. I love his personality, he is so easy to be around. I’m crazy about him and he’s crazy about me.”

Play Royal, “Fletch,” and Bettencourt were destined to be together from the start. She went to the NCHA Select two-year-old sale in 2004 with the goal of buying him because of his breeding. Unfortunately, while bidding on him during the auction the price went out of her budget. She was forced to stop, but she wasn’t ready to give up yet.

“When he (Fletch) went out of my price range I was pretty bummed. I told MG Brown and my mom, ‘I am going to go see who bought him, or if the owner bought him back.’ It must have been meant to be, because I talked to the owner, made him an offer that he accepted and Fletch has been mine ever since,” boasts Bettencourt.

Fletch and Bettencourt proved this year that they not only can they be competitive on the NCHA circuit, but they can win. Now that they have the ball rolling, you can guarantee they will continuously be in the winner’s circle.

\$10,000 Amateur Champion: Dedee McWhorter

Hauling never even crossed the mind of this year’s \$10,000 Amateur Champion, Dedee McWhorter. In fact, it wasn’t until mid-August that she finally admitted that she was hauling.

“I decided to go for it after McArthur. Shannon, my husband, and Jason Haefner went golfing together. I don’t know what really happened, but when they returned Jason said ‘fill your tank you’re hauling’. People kept telling me at the beginning of the year to haul, but I just wanted to take it one show at a time,” explains McWhorter.

After this encounter, McWhorter and her well-loved gelding, Time to Swing by Justa Swinging Peppy, really hit the pavement. With their hard work and dedication not only did they clench the PCCHA championship; they also finished as the NCHA Reserve World Champion.

McWhorter found her horse, aka Timex, 21st century style. After she saw him on the Internet, she went to Mike Warman who then set up a time for her to try him. Jainet Gaines had currently owned Timex, while she had numerous aged-event championships with him, she had decided to sell him as he was turning seven and would be out of the aged events. Timex was an instant fit for McWhorter.

“I had tried four horses that day and had been looking for over a year. We just happened to click. My daughter was with me, who has a good eye for horses and just started to nod her head with a big smile. After that I knew he must look good!” says McWhorter.

Not only does McWhorter credit her daughter for being the final approval for Timex, she was also the one who got McWhorter hooked on cutting. Her daughter had cut in High School Rodeo but when she moved on to college rodeo she decided that she wanted to focus on roping.

“She didn’t like cutting as much, so she gave her horse to me. I loaded her up and took her to Deb Fonsen’s house. Deb had me cut their watusi, I just remember seeing these big horns in front of me. I could not stop my horse I was laughing so hard. That was all it took, one horse, one saddle, and one event,” recalls McWhorter.

Though McWhorter admits she is glad it is over, she also says she is already looking forward to 2010.

\$2,000 Limit Rider Champion: Tracy Hart

It took two years for \$2,000 Limit Rider Champion Tracy Hart to make the decision to haul for the PCCHA and NCHA championship. Her dad, Wes Johnson, had always encouraged her to go for it, but it took her two years to believe she would be able to compete at this level. This year she proved her dad right by winning the PCCHA championship and being top ten in NCHA.

Hart showed a Badger Safari mare, Easter Safari, named for being born on Easter and fondly called Lily around the barn. Her dad has trained this nine-year-old mare all along.

“My dad and I loved her from the start. She had attitude and style as a two-year old, and now she knows it at the age of nine. She is just one of those horses that loves to work cows. While the owner tried to sell her a few times to clients in my dad’s barn, it never quite worked