

Shaunda Rae Ruckman Wins Over \$60,000 with NRBC Non Pro Levels 1-4 Titles



Winning a Championship at the National Reining Breeders Classic is an accomplishment. Two is a huge success, three is unbelievable – and four is unheard of. That is, it was unheard of until Shaunda Rae Ruckman teamed up with Rufanicki to win not only the Non Pro Championship – but also the Intermediate Non Pro, Limited Non Pro, and Non Pro Level 1 titles!

"I'm overwhelmed – this is unbelievable!" the Scottsdale, Arizona, Non Pro exclaimed following the awards ceremony.

Ruckman's goal was simple – to make the finals at the largest added-money reining in the world. She knew she'd be ecstatic if she even made the top ten. "I don't recall much about the run. I remember going into the first stop and he was so good. I don't know that I've ever run him that fast in his circles. He was a little tired when he got to his stops but he gave it his all," she said.

The judges awarded that run with a 224 – the highest score during the Finals – and Ruckman and Rufanicki, by Lil Ruf Peppy out of Chexanicki, were the Non Pro Champions.

Along with the cash – a total to the tune of \$60,000 – Ruckman received a year's use of a deluxe two-horse trailer from Twin Cities Featherlite, a custom saddle sponsored by Continental Saddlery, a custom saddle from Bob's Custom Saddles, a custom saddle from Eagle Mountain Saddlery, and a custom saddle sponsored by the NRBC. She also takes home a Catena watch from Catena USA, a pair of Rios of Mercedes boots, two Whisper Bits from M3 Products, four Tim McQuay The Art of Reining complete DVD sets, 100lbs of Resilience Omega 3, along with four Gist Silversmiths buckles and the signature blue crystal NRBC trophies.

Ruckman purchased Rufanicki from Pat Warren of Rancho Oso Rio, who had got the horse from Kelly Smith. "He is the sweetest horse ever and always gives 110%. I never in a million years thought I'd get a chance to own a horse like him," she said. "I still constantly look at his papers to prove to myself he's mine."

The 40-year-old trains with Martin Muehlstaetter, whose wife, Kim Dooley, won the Non Pro Championship in 2010. "It's a testament to Martin's program that he's had a Non Pro Champion two years in a row," she said.

Ruckman gave props to the NRBC, noting, "If we had to pick one event a year to go to, it would definitely be this one – and that was *before* all of this! This is definitely my favorite show. The facility is phenomenal and the sponsors are amazing and make all this stuff possible. I thank them, my family, my friends – everyone!"

The Non Pro Reserve Championship went to Lance Griffin and The Great Tag, by Whiz N Tag Chex out of Pines BH (Shirleys Folly). Griffin, of Dewinton, Alberta, Canada, and the 6-year-old gelding marked a 222 to win the Reserve title and \$23,190. The pair also topped the Non Pro Prime Time finals, worth an additional \$1,725.

With a score of 221, Jessica Sternberg of East Sussex, England, claimed Reserve honors in the Intermediate Non Pro, Limited Non Pro, and Non Pro Level 1. Sternberg was riding Shiners Chic, by Smart Chic Olena out of Ebony Shines. Along with the Reserve Championships, Sternberg finished fourth in the Non Pro – and her winnings totaled \$27,577. Sternberg and Shiners Chic also hold the distinction of being the first round winners, which meant an additional \$11,284 in earnings.

The NRBC also features a full-slate of National Reining Horse Association-approved classes, which run in the East Arena while the Classic is held in the Coliseum. The National Reining Breeders Classic is the most successful stallion incentive program in reining history. In just fourteen years, the NRBC has grown to include nearly 200 subscribed stallions. Annually, the payout at the National Reining Breeders Classic exceeds \$1.4 million. For information on the NRBC, visit the web site at www.nrbc.com or call 580-759-3939.

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