



# 2010

## FUTURITY/DERBY JUNIOR DIVISION



Women's Professional Rodeo Association

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## Futurity/Derby Program

The WPRA Futurity and Derby program is the beginning steps of turning barrel horse prospects into champion rodeo horses.

The program, which began in 2006, is for building better rodeo horses that will last through the years. The program gives members a place to take young horses and introduce them to the competition arena but in a more relaxed atmosphere.

The Futurities are open to horses 5-years-

old and younger that are competing for the first time, while the Derby program is for 6- and 7-year-old horses, as long as they did not compete in Futurities as a 4-year old. A horse that starts his competitive career as a 4-year-old has two years of eligibility, but as a 5- and 6-year-old.

The program has proven a great training ground for building rodeo horses of the future.

Cowboys Association All-Around Champ, left his Blythe, Calif., ranch for Oklahoma. His search for a barrel horse for his daughters ended in Chickasha, when he purchased Sand's Flapper, a granddaughter of the great sire Oklahoma Star.

When Jan Duquette was 14, she and Sand's Flapper ended up second in the California standings and earned a berth to the National Finals Rodeo in Oklahoma City. Unfortunately, she didn't get to compete and her spot was given to another barrel racer.

"I didn't get to go because my parents would have had to take me out of school for two weeks," lamented Duquette, now a WPRA Gold Card member.

Sand's Flapper ended up in the broodmare band and became the cornerstone of the Duquette barrel-horse breeding program now managed by Duquette's sister Peggy Davis, and her husband, Scott.

"They do all the breeding and imprinting them, breaking them and getting them strong, and then I get the 3-year-olds," explained Duquette. "(Peggy's) exceptional at matching the right mares to the right stallions and getting the right balance."

Ben, a 5-year-old gelding, is by Pro Elite Sire Incentive stallion Alive N Firen and out of Peppi D Deck, by Indito. On the maternal side, Peppi D Deck is a great-granddaughter of Sand's Flapper.

"It's nice that we've been breeding all this time and still have been able to do well with colts from her," noted Duquette.

Because Peggy has first hands on the colts, she named the gelding.

"When he was born he reminded me of Gentle Ben, the bear on TV," said Peggy

## Magico Fire Water and Jan Duquette claim 2009 WPRA Futurity World Championship; Lisa Ruhnke and First Banana earn Derby World title

by Tanya Randall

When the final point totals on the WPRA's 2009 Futurity and Derby season, which ran from the first of December 2008 to the WPRA World Finals in Tulsa, Okla., in November, Magico Fire Water ("Ben"), ridden by Jan Duquette for her brother-in-law and sister, Scott and Peggy Davis, earned the WPRA World Champion title in the futurity division. In the derby division, First Banana ("Chiquita"), owned and ridden by Lisa Ruhnke, captured the Derby World title.

Ben and Duquette earned \$7,952 on the year and amassed 137 points, while Ruhnke and Chiquita earned \$2,023 and collected 67 points for their respective titles.

### Futurity Champion - Magico Fire Water and Jan Duquette

Ben was bred to be a WPRA World Champion.

His winning legacy starts back in 1961 when Russ Duquette, the first California

## Futurity/Derby Program

Davis. "He was just very good natured, gentle and wanted to do whatever you asked him to do."

Although Ben is light on the gas pedal like Brittany Pozzi's Yeah Hes Firen ("Duke"), a paternal half-brother, and likes his job just as much, Duquette said their personalities are vastly different.

"Ben is a little a bit different," she said. "For the most part Ben's been very quiet. You can go take him on a trail ride and turn around and go run barrels. Of course, the more you run them, the higher they're going to get, no question about it. For the most part, he's got a very kind, soft eye, and has been very, as Peggy says, 'gentle.'"

When Duquette got Ben as a 3-year-old, she had a lot of work to do—not because of Ben—but because of her job and location.

Duquette, who resides in Dana Point, right on the coast of California between Los Angeles and San Diego, has a full time job as a professor of kinesiology at Saddleback College in Mission Viejo.

"I get done with my classes at 1 (p.m.) and I go back for night school at 6 (p.m.)," she explained. "I try to rotate four horses in the afternoon. I've got the two colts and two pro rodeo horses. I try to do the colts one day and the pro horses the next day.

"I live in Orange County and there isn't any land. I've been at a boarding facility for probably the last 15 years with no arena and no barrels to practice. I have to travel to do barrels. I try to go to any time only's within an hour's drive. I have some friends that have arenas that I haul to. So, it's very challenging. We've had to travel more to do what most



Lisa Ruhnke and First Banana capture the 2009 WPRA Derby title. From left to right: Kim Thomas (Futurity Director), Ruhnke, First Banana and Kathi Myers (WPRA President). Photo by Kenneth Springer.

# Futurity/Derby Program

people can accomplish in their back yards.”

Duquette did most of Ben’s training as a 3-year-old, which she believes is the key year of training. As a 4-year-old she hauled all over the country to do time only’s, from Southern California to Utah. The result was an incredibly consistent 5-year-old futurity horse.

“This year we committed 100 percent,” she said. “We went almost every weekend to every futurity that we could. Ben has placed at almost every futurity since January and has been in the Top 5 at a lot of them. We’re thrilled with how he’s been performing, as they say, very consistently.”

Duquette said about the only thing she has to watch with Ben is getting far enough on the backside of the barrels.

“The one thing I have to watch for is that he can cut back so quick I really have to keep him moving,” she said. “It’s cost me a couple of futurities because I’ve hit barrels.”

Ben is already making the transition from futurity horse to rodeo horse.

“Peggy’s never going to sell Ben,” laughed Duquette. “We’re working on a transition program to the rodeos. We’re going to go to the rodeos where we think he can do well at. In fact, his first rodeo was at City Of Industry. Although we hit the second barrel, we ran within a 10th of Sherry Cervi on Stingray (MP Meter My Hay). So we know he can run at that level. We just have to transition properly. Go slow and enter slack at the ones that we can and try to look for good ground. He’s also still eligible for the WPRA Derby program and we’re going to try to go to those.”

Duquette would love it if Ben proved to be a horse worth quitting her job for.

“If he continues to do well and bring home checks, it’s possible that I could retire in the next two years,” she said. “When you have a horse like that, you want to see what it can do.”

## Derby Champion Lisa Ruhnke and First Banana

When Lisa Ruhnke started running Chiquita at the first of the year, the mare was running a second-and-a-half off the winning horses and by the Fourth of July she was placing at pro rodeos.

“In January, we were a second-and-a-half off of everybody, just loping, so we’ve come a long way,” said Ruhnke, who hails from Hondo, Texas. “I think she’s done a lot in a year’s time.”

By the first of July, Chiquita had claimed the lead in the derby standings and solidified their World Championship by winning the WPRA lead sanctioned Derby at Sycamore Springs Ranch in Locust Grove, Okla.

It was at Locust Grove where she had her most memorable run of the year, even though she didn’t win the race.

“In the open, she fell down and still clocked within a 10<sup>th</sup> of the winning run,” Ruhnke recalled. “She went completely down and came back up on the second barrel.”

It doesn’t hurt that the flashy palomino mare can mortally fly. Ruhnke picked Chiquita out of Vickie Adam’s herd of 3-year-olds. Chiquita is by First Triumph, a late son of First Down Dash that Adams had stood for Mike and Janelle Green’s Southern Rose Ranch, and out of The Banana Queen, a daughter of Adams’ multiple National Finals Rodeo sire and new addition to PESI, Fire Water Flit.

Although Ruhnke had intended to futurity the mare as a 5-year-old, she made a costly mistake when the mare was 4. After arriving at a jackpot too late for exhibitions, Ruhnke entered the mare in the jackpot to keep from wasting a trip and unknowingly ruined her mare’s 5-year-old futurity eligibility. So the first year performer was forced to run against older horses and 5-year-olds in their second year of competition in the derbies.

“I’m really happy that she did well,” said Ruhnke, who works as a realtor and part-time accountant for her family’s two title companies. “I think she did well and deserved the title. I look for her to mature a little bit more and get tougher and stronger.”

Unfortunately, the duo didn’t have the WPRA Finals that they were hoping for.

Ruhnke and Chiquita had entered a few rodeos in the fall, and having placed at Pasadena, Seguin and Liberty, Texas, pro rodeos, were sitting in the Top five in the WPRA Standings. Ruhnke entered the WPRA Finals Barrel Race to keep her in the standings so she could attend her childhood dream rodeos this winter in San Antonio and Houston as well as the Derby.

Ruhnke knew she was asking a lot of her

# Futurity/Derby Program

young charge, especially having to make two runs in one day. After hitting the third barrel and loping home in the WPRA open, Chiquita didn’t work well at all in the first go of the Derby. Her second run in the open, Chiquita made one of her nicest first barrels in her career and clocked a 16.3, but came out of the pen highly agitated.

“She came out really irritable, really moody,” Ruhnke explained. “You could tell something was bothering her. She popped a splint. I took her to the vet up there, Robbin Johnson, and she said, ‘Lisa, it’s hot; it’s bothering her.’ So I drew her out of the Derby. It was too much.

“It wasn’t what I wanted, but it’s what happened.”

Very promptly after Tulsa, Chiquita had her splint treated with shockwave therapy and appears to be well for the Barrel Futurities of America’s World Championship Derby.

Ruhnke is very mindful of her young charge because she knows she has an awesome horse in

the making.

“When I did the Tanner Time deal on her, there weren’t many horses as fast as she was between the second and third barrel,” she said. “She was 25 miles per hour when most horses were 20-21 miles per hour. Her straights are unbelievable. When I get the turns down with that speed—and I will—it will be awesome.”

Ruhnke doesn’t have to worry about running her mare too much because family constraints keep her in check. She has two young boys, ages 6 and 9, who are avid sports players. She noted that the challenge of balancing barrel racing and motherhood is constant.

“It’s a job within a job,” she said. “You have to plan your day so you can go out and ride.”

But Ruhnke wouldn’t change that part of her life for anything, saying, “I love my boys in the house and my girls in the barn!”

## Champions

### Futurity:

2009 – Jan Duquette/Magico Fire Water  
2008 – Leslie Maynard/LRM Lightning Watch  
2007 – Judy Melvin/MNMs Vanilla Sky  
2006 – Kay Blandford/Talents Dark Angel

### Derby:

2009 – Lisa Ruhnke – First Banana  
2008 – Susie McConaghie – Super Hero (PT)  
2007 – Lacy Billingsley – Shawne Dash

## Junior Division

It remains one of the most indelible images of WPRA history. Blonde curls bobbing, bat clinched firmly between her teeth, a barely teenaged Clayton, N.M., cowgirl roared into the history books of barrel racing. Charmayne James was just 14 when she and super horse Scamper won the first of a record 10 straight world championships. Along the way, she captured the hearts of rodeo fans across the nation.

The site of young girls guiding their top equine partners flawlessly through a barrel pattern disappeared in the mid-nineties when the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association initiated a mandatory age limit of 18 years of age for competitors at PRCA sanctioned rodeos. Due to the relationship between the two sanctioning bodies at the time, the WPRA followed suit and little girls no longer had a place in professional rodeo.

Beginning in 2007, the WPRA instituted the WPRA Junior Division for all girls aged 17 and under. The junior division introduces a whole new group of members to the ranks of professional competition and allows mothers and daughters to compete for world points at some of the same events.

Juniors run in WPRA Junior sanctioned races as well as co-sanctioned divisional races and rodeos to earn points for the WPRA World Finals. Juniors can only earn points in WPRA Junior Division races, in co-sanctioned rodeos, and in the 1D of co-sanctioned divisional races. Juniors do not compete against WPRA members for points are not eligible to enter WPRA events or rodeos.

Among the big name races co-sanctioned for the WPRA juniors is the world renowned Josey Junior World Championship barrel race. Hosted by legends RE and Martha Josey, the 1980 WPRA World Champion, this race has played host to thousands of aspiring barrel racers through the years, many of whom have gone on to tremendous success in the ranks of the WPRA.

## Mehalic comes from behind to capture the 2009 WPRA Junior Barrel Racing Division title

by *Kristen M. White*

Lake Mehalic has already acquired a taste for winning big titles, and the barrel racer is just 11 years old.

Mehalic recently won the year-end title for the WPRA's junior barrel racing division (18-and-under), competing against other girls several years her senior. And now that she's got a big win on her resume, she wants to add some more.

"I would definitely like to try and make another title (run next year)," she said. "That was my favorite thing, and it was very exciting."

To win the year-end title, Mehalic won more money through the season — finishing with nearly \$5,000 in prize money — than her competitors. Entering the finals, held in Tulsa, Okla., Nov. 10-14, Mehalic was in third place for the year-end title, so she knew

she had some work to do at the finals if she wanted to snag that title.

"In the first round, the two girls in front of me knocked down barrels, and I won some money that day," she said of her fourth-place finish. "Then in the second round they were tied for fourth place and I won some money (finishing just behind in sixth place).

"And since they didn't make the short round, then I knew I had it won. Phew!"

Mehalic had her fastest time in the first round, finishing the cloverleaf pattern in 16.12 seconds. Her combined total for the first two rounds netted her a \$210 check for a fourth-place finish in the average, and advanced her to the short round. Though she didn't win any money that round, the average check proved to be enough to boost her to the year-end title.

She did it aboard her 16-year-old quarter

horse Copper, who she said is "just amazing.

"He's a good horse," Mehalic said. "He usually just goes out and does what he's supposed to do. Sometimes you have to get after him and loosen him up a little, but he knows his job and he just does it."

Copper showed his skills during the third day, when Mehalic said she first lost her reins, followed by a stirrup. "And then I got dashboarded," she said. "But he still managed to get around the barrel anyway. He was so amazing, I can't even explain it."

Mehalic has grown up around horses and rodeo, and started riding at age 3. When she was 5, she told her Dad she wanted to learn how to ride on her own, and by age 6 she was racing.

"I love being around horses, running fast, turning sharp turns ..." she said. "I love competing."

She started in the WPRA Junior

## Junior Division

Division two years ago and also competes in the Wrangler (junior high) Division of the National High School Rodeo Association.

Mehalic, of Oro Valley, Ariz., competes in the Grand Canyon Professional Rodeo Association (GCPRA) as well, and this year took home the year-end title in the open barrels division. Clearly, competing is something Mehalic and Cooper excel at.

She said competing against older girls at the WPRA World Finals didn't intimidate her, but instead she said it "makes me feel like 10 times better" to beat out the older competition.

Mehalic obviously has many years of competition ahead of her, first in junior high and high school rodeo and eventually, she hopes, into the professional level as well.

"I definitely want to make it to the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo someday," she said.



Lake Mehalic comes from behind to capture her first WPRA Junior Division World Title and is already eyeing a repeat performance in 2010. Photo by Kenneth Springer.

# Junior Division

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She's working with a new horse right now, named Shrimp, who Mehalic said she thinks is "really fast, in my opinion." And perhaps if Shrimp proves to be a good barrel runner too, it'll give Mehalic some options, and Copper a bit of a break.

As for this season, he was a busy horse. After winning the WPRA title, Mehalic said she returned home from Tulsa and Copper got a few days rest, but the following weekend was the finals for the GCPRA, so the two

were back in the arena again. Now, Copper is finally getting some much-deserved rest.

And the money Mehalic won this season? She understands the costs of rodeo, and said she "just kind of puts it back into the horses." But if this season is any indication, Mehalic will have lots of years to start banking up some money.

Her success at a young age hasn't gone to her head. Mehalic said she "just loves barrel racing" and can't wait to get started again

## Champions

2009 – Lake Mehalic, Atalisa, Iowa

2008 – Tara Timms, Leedy, Okla.

2007 – Madison Montchal, Oro Valley, Ariz.