



## **Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup Successful in Event Return**

**Denver, Colo.** – The National Western Stock Show (NWSS) hosted a successful Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup on opening day of the 116<sup>th</sup> annual event. Despite not being able to host a physical event in 2021, ten talented equestrian youth were matched with ten influential industry leaders for a mutually beneficial event to kick off the start of the 16-day show. Mentor Matchup was created to provide an opportunity for local equestrian youth to learn and compete during the NWSS through relevant hands-on educational activities with their equine partner and top equine professionals.

Ten individuals ages 14-21 from Colorado and Wyoming were pre-selected and paired with industry professionals who acted as their “coach” or “mentor” for the day. Identified by matching shirts, the selected youth received one-on-one practice time with their coach, rotating through various stations to practice ranch horse skills. In the afternoon, the youth competed against each other for scholarship money provided by the National Western Scholarship Trust. They were asked to complete a ranch trail pattern, a ranch riding pattern, a modified reining pattern and beginning cow work. The selected youth and coaches gathered Friday night, prior to being matched with their Saturday mentor, to network and ask questions of each other and the coaches as a new addition to this year’s event.

It was Lorelee Ward’s first time competing in the Mentor Matchup with her 11-year-old Quarter Horse, Smart Lookin CD, and they managed to earn the top score and the championship which includes a \$2,000 scholarship from the National Western Scholarship Trust. She hails from Fort Lupton, Colo. and was matched with Colorado reining trainer Shane Brown. Lorelee began competing with horses in team penning and ranch sorting and has added barrel racing to her list of events. Last year she was named the Reserve Champion All-Around in Colorado State High School Rodeo. She and Lookin’ also qualified for, and earned the top cow horse scores in, the Level 3 Boxing Finals in 2020 and 2021 at the AQHA Youth World Show. She hopes to gain skills to better herself as a horsewoman and eventually train barrel futurity horses and compete in the Art of the Cowgirl event. Ultimately she would like to qualify for the National Finals Rodeo on a horse she trained herself. Shane owns and operates Shane Brown Performance Horses out of Elbert, Colo. Starting as a teen himself, his dedication and work ethic have brought him continued successes including: NRHA Futurity Intermediate Finalist, AQHA World Show Finalist, APHA World Show Champion, multiple AQHA World Show qualifiers and many regional championships. Shane has competed around the world through the USEF and FEI and has served as the RMRHA President and an NRHA Executive Committee Member. This was Shane’s second (consecutive) win as a coach in the Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup following his 2020 championship coaching Reagan Wheatley.

Taking home the reserve championship and a \$1,000 scholarship from the National Western Scholarship Trust was Taneal Braslin from Delta, Colo. She rode her 5-year-old Quarter Horse gelding Metallic Mescalita to the win and became interested in cow horse events at the high school rodeos where they

currently sit in second place in the state standings. Taneal hopes to qualify for nationals this coming year in the reined cow horse division and eventually become a horse trainer. She was excited to learn through this experience and hear various points of views from the professionals. Her coach was versatile equestrian Karen Banister from Brighton, Colo. Karen and her family own and operate White Harvest Farms that breeds and trains many disciplines including all-around, roping and hunter jumper. She is a carded judge with multiple associations and has judged and competed across the globe including U.S., Canada, Italy, Germany, Italy, France and Holland.

Comments from the selection committee were echoed from both the coaches and renowned judge Ollie Griffith on the talent level and dedication of the youth riders and their athletic horses. In between learning and practicing, there was also time out of the saddle for the youth to get to know the other youth riders and coaches both at Friday night's gathering and Saturday's lunch. The camaraderie showed during the competition when every youth rider and coach cheered for each other. The youth riders were able to gather knowledge from their mentors in areas they felt needed some advancement and showcased their new skills during competition.

#### [Full Results](#)

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