

NATIONAL WESTERN *Stock Show*

Eyes on the Prize

Every January hundreds of competitors flock to the familiar surroundings of the National Western Complex that becomes their 'home away from home'. The livestock exhibitors can be found in the stock yards, the artists in the Coors Art Room, the rodeo contestants in the Coliseum and equestrians reigning in the Events Center for all 16 days of the National Western Stock Show. Many equestrians have become quite fond of the distinct atmosphere, noting there is something so iconic about the early morning grooming, late night hacks, the diverse crowd of guests wandering the barns as horses are tacked up, a plethora of school children with eyes as large as saucers absorbing their first animal experience, good laughs (or maybe a good cry) that solidify Denver in horse exhibitors' minds. Many memories are created and reminisced while dreams come true on the floor of the CINCH Arena, including those of Hunter/Jumper exhibitor Anna Mannerfelt.



A wide variety of equestrian disciplines are showcased every year at the Stock Show with the Hunter/Jumper show drawing Swedish born horse-lover, Anna. Long hours are required to prepare for a prestigious event like Stock Show and she and her equine partner, Dekan 34, are more than excited for the grueling fall and winter that leads up to January. Anna shows a Trakehner Warmblood that stands at an intimidating 17.2 hands tall (approximately 5'8" at the shoulder) who was imported from Germany a few years ago. Don't be intimidated by his size however, because when asked about her prize gelding, Anna claims, "[Dekan] is a happy and very careful horse. I have never seen him pin his ears at anything and [he] loves to roll after a long ride", further cementing the fact that Dekan really is just a gentle giant.

Anna has been in and out of the equine industry since she was a little girl. Born and raised in Sweden, she learned to ride early in life before moving to the States twenty years ago where her love of showing horses followed. After a brief horse break, Anna reentered the industry to show in the Hunter/Jumper division with support from local trainer Paul Rohrbach of Wells Bridge Farm. Anna describes the unique atmosphere of the Stock Show as "the wild west meets English equestrians" and how so many disciplines are seamlessly blended in equine bliss. She laughs, recalling "the warmup jumper ring is always a hoot because of the barn animals and all the people attending." Anna also says she is drawn to show every January at the National Western because "It's a fun indoor ring to show at and we love to walk the stockyards and visit all the brands and booths". Her first horse, Beau, an American Quarter Horse, helped her become competitive in the 3' jumpers and pushed her to be her best not only in the ring but outside the ring as well. Beau easily became the inspiration for Anna's young company Wired Mustang.

Along with her founding partner David, Anna drew from her love of the equine industry and an over thirty-year background in marketing around the world to become a successful businesswoman. Wired Mustang is a marketing agency “for horse people, by horse people”. They specialize in brand development and marketing for equine-related businesses, even claiming “you would not take your horse to a small animal veterinarian, so why trust the growth of your equine-related business to a marketing agency without horse sense?” Since the company’s founding four years ago, business has been strong within the bustling and developing horse community.



The vast and diverse community of the equestrian world provides many outlets for competitors, teaching them skills that can be used in many unexpected ways. While ribbons and trophies collect dust, the memories and love of the National Western Stock Show catapult many endeavors of successful equestrians. Anna is one of many who drew success from inspiration from our four-legged furry counterparts and continues to foster her love of showing at the National Western. It just goes to show that dreams do come true, in AND out of the CINCH Arena.

By Brittany Vogl, 2020 Youth Equestrian Showcase Grand Champion