

NATIONAL WESTERN Stock Show

Bittersweet Memories Horseman's Challenge

Five events over two days comprised the third National Western Horseman's Challenge. Winning first place in the Advanced division and second in the Speed Challenge was Margaret Blaha of Golden, Colorado. A longtime National Western Stock Show fan, Margaret and her partner Sonny savored their win this year.



Sonny, a 19-year-old sorrel and white gelding, competed in his last show as Margaret officially retired him from showing. The two have been partners for 15 years and Sonny will retire at home with Margaret. They started showing at the National Western Stock Show in 2018, where they topped the Speed Challenge at the first Horseman's Challenge. So, it is fitting they won another class in their last competition together.

Margaret manages The Horse Protection League, a nonprofit organization that works with training and rehoming mustangs. Sonny has a job there too. When young horses or especially nervous horses come in, Sonny has been partnered up as a guide. With his calm, easy going attitude he teaches these horses how to do the whole "horse" thing. While he may be retired from the show ring, he will continue as a calming influence with the mustangs.

Margaret also owns and operates Clear Creek Carriages. The company performs at events and hopes to grow in the near future. While Margaret was waiting on a draft horse, Sonny filled in, supporting Margaret's 'show must go on' philosophy. Sonny also works as a therapy horse in therapeutic riding programs. Just standing next to Sonny and Margaret, you can see and feel the connection they have. She states "he truly is a one-of-a-kind horse."



Margaret hopes to expand The Horse Protection Program's youth program in the future. This program allows for kids to come and care for a mustang. After a successful two-month stint caring for them, the organization will waive the adoption fee. Close to Margaret's heart and I would argue for all of us, is the future of the agriculture community. We owe thanks to people like Margaret Blaha and horses like Sonny that continue to drive this great industry.

Story by Margaret Dull, 2020 NWSS Horse Show Intern