



What is Mentor Matchup

Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup

The National Western Stock Show (NWSS) Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup scholarship program is just two years old and already very popular with competitors and spectators alike. Created in 2018, Mentor Matchup provides 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.

Prior to the 2019 and 2020 shows, individuals ages 14-21 from Colorado and Wyoming were encouraged to apply for consideration. On opening day of NWSS, ten selected youth were paired with industry professionals who acted as their “coach” or “mentor” for the day. Donned in matching shirts, the selected youth received one-on-one practice time with their coach, rotating through several areas to practice various skills. Then 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 then they chose to box, rope or fence a cow.



Comments from the selection committee were echoed from both the coaches and renowned horseman and the 2019 Mentor Matchup judge, Jody Brainard, 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. The camaraderie showed during the competition when every youth rider and coach cheered for each other. Much gratitude is also owed to the talented equine professionals who instantly agreed to be involved and give back to our industry.

2019 Recap

In a closely scoring competition, two top individuals earned the titles of Grand and Reserve Grand Champion and scholarship money to use at the school of their choice. Twenty-year-old Colorado Mesa University student Amanda Seymour from Olathe, Colo. was paired with Colorado trainer Cody Crow for the day. Aboard her 13-year-old bay roan Quarter Horse gelding Fourth and Ten (Pinky), the pair scored an impressive 281 ½ to win her top honors and \$2,000 from the National Western Scholarship Trust.

Only a half point behind her, 21-year-old Fort Lupton, Colo. native Kaylynn Sheldon rode her 8-year-old homebred grey Paint mare Hickory on the Moon to Reserve Grand Champion honors and \$1,000 scholarship. Attending Laramie County Community College for dental hygiene, Kaylynn teamed up with now two-time NWSS Invitational Ranch Rodeo Champion Team captain Jesse Jolly from Agate, Colo. Jesse is the assistant coach for the Otero Junior College Rodeo team and has two WRCA Ranch Rodeo world championships to his name among many other impressive titles.



2020 Recap



Nationally known judge and competitor, Drake Johnson of Wray, Colo. accepted the challenging task of judging the 2020 competition and commented on the strong connection he saw not only between the youth competitors and their mounts, but also the youth and their coaches throughout the day.

Tara Hiatt from Elizabeth, Colo. competed last year and was coached by Jet McCoy. She rode Genuine Gray Starlite (Spirit) a 17-year-old Quarter Horse (oldest in the competition) to the Reserve Grand Championship title, earning her a \$1,000 scholarship. Spirit has been

her partner for eight years and have improved to become the Elizabeth Stampede Queen and earn a spot on the Northeastern Junior College Ranch Horse Team. Jet McCoy of Oklahoma comes from a rodeo and ranching background and can be recognized from appearances with his brother Cord from “The Amazing Race.” He is a four-time International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) champion. He owns and operates McCoy Ranch and is team captain of their ranch rodeo team.

Just ahead was Reagan Wheatley from Calhan, Colo., coached by Shane Brown, who took home the Grand Champion title and \$2,000 in scholarship money. He rode his 9-year-old Quarter Horse gelding Bug Lites to the win and hopes to use the scholarship money at Texas Tech or Clarendon in pursuit of a business degree. Shane Brown from Elbert, Colo. owns and operations Shane Brown Performance Horses, focusing on reining and cow horse. He serves on the National Reining Horse Association board and has multiple national honors to his name.

The youth riders expressed their excitement to be chosen for the Mentor Matchup and to have the opportunity to learn from some of the top equine professionals in the business. The mentors enjoyed sharing their knowledge and experience to help riders gain confidence and experience and have a great time while competing.

