

Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup

2024 Recap

The annual Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup competition kicked off the 2024 National Western Stock Show in the CINCH Events Arena on opening Saturday. As a premier youth opportunity in the equine industry, ten skilled Colorado and Wyoming residents are selected to learn and compete alongside their equine partners and with the guidance of top equine professionals. This program allows youth ages 14-21 years old to network with professionals, expand their horsemanship skills and knowledge, and have a chance to earn scholarship money. Youth participants exhibit their skills in four events: Ranch Trail, Ranch Riding, Reining and Cow Work.

Lindsey Thomas hailing from Veteran, WY clinched the 2024 Youth Ranch Horse Mentor Matchup champion title under the expert mentorship of equine professional, Jet McCoy. With a total of 295.50 points, Lindsey Thomas won both the Ranch Riding and Reining on her gelding, HF Shiney Surprise. Lindsey Thomas is a member of multiple reining horse associations and the president of her local 4-H club. Entering this competition, her goal was to learn more about the industry and enhance her horsemanship skills. She explained her aspirations to positively impact the equine industry and pursue future competitions in amateur and non-pro events.



Anna Thomas of Longmont, CO claimed the 2024 reserve championship honors, supported by mentor Steve Schwitzenberger. Anna won the Ranch Trail event, adding to her cumulative score of 294.50 points. Her grandparents bred her equine partner, Shining Persian Cat, making this win even more special. Anna Thomas is involved in youth leadership through Niwot High School, 4-H and the National FFA Organization. She plans to be on her college ranch horse team and continue to show her horse in the future. In the Mentor Matchup program, Anna was passionate about meeting trainers and gaining knowledge from professional horseman.

Lindsey Thomas received a \$2,000 scholarship while Anna Thomas received a \$1,000 scholarship from the National Western Scholarship Trust for their championship titles. Other youth competitors included Beck Paulsen, Baleigh Lane, Josie Waite, Shirley Jo Thompson, Bo Tilton, Paige Pointer, Delaney Helgans and Cooper Justus. Industry professionals donating their time to this influential program included Naomi Bancroft, Karen Banister, Shane Brown, Cody Crow, Mark Guynn, Dan James, Jesse Jolly, Matt Koch, Jet McCoy and Steve Schwitzenberger.

These youth represent the future of the equine industry through their commitment to learn and excellence on horseback. The passion demonstrated by competitors and coaches alike symbolizes the resilience of the entire equestrian community.

Written by Claire Case, 2024 Horse Show Intern
Photos by Performance Horse Photography