

# Local horsemen claim top honors at Cow Horse Classic

After a weeklong display of expert horsemanship by hundreds of contestants at the San Lucas Ranch Cow Horse Classic, local trainers Mark Luis and Phillip Ralls were named Limited Open Champion and Reserve Limited Open Champion respectively. Luis also placed in both the Open and Intermediate Open Classes and Phillip also placed in the Open.

Luis has been training horses at his own facility for the last two years. He rode formerly with Phillip's father, Ron Ralls, at his operation at

Rancho Jonata in Buellton. Luis has a long history locally of training rope and ranch horses. He was talked into taking a lesson with Ralls by a client, was offered a job, and ended up working for him for five years. Ralls became a mentor in learning the intricacies of the sport of reined cow horse. When Ralls accepted the opportunity to work for a renowned ranch in Texas, Luis decided to start his own training facility on family land in Los Alamos.

After successes at some smaller shows like the Old

Spanish Days Stock Horse Show in Santa Barbara (he won the Open Bridle Class two years in a row), Luis and his father-in-law, Chuck Doss, went looking for a snaffle bit prospect at last year's sale held during the World Championship Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno, Nev.

"I saw this horse working in the practice pen. I couldn't believe he was only a two year old because he was so good on a cow," recalled Luis. "I watched him every time he worked and was impressed with how supple and athletic he was. There were two other horses I was looking at, but there was just something special about this one so Chuck and I went partners on him. Now he has taken me to my first big win in the industry."

Sliding into the Reserve Champion slot Phillip earned the title on not one, but two horses. He had the exact same score on both.

"My mom owns one and her best friend owns the other. I didn't want to show any favoritism so I had to get the same score," laughed Phillip.

Both horses are by a stallion that Phillip's father started for Monty Roberts named Captain Nice. Ralls won the National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) Silver Legacy show on this horse several years ago. Captain Nice was sold to the ranch where Ralls now works and he has qualified for the American Quarter Horse World Show.

"I am really happy with this first bunch of Captain Nice babies to show. I'm so impressed with how they want to learn and how athletic and cow-y they are," remarked Phillip. "I just want to thank Platinum Performance (a feed supplement developed at Alamo Pintado Equine Clinic

in Los Olivos) for helping to keep my horses at their performance peak."

Phillip was a successful high school rodeo competitor for many years and has recently begun training reined cow horses. His all around skills helped him to win the Open Ranch Horse Class at the recent Old Span-

ish Days Stock Horse Show and Rodeo.

Both Ralls and Luis are headed at the end of the month to the NRCHA World Championship Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno where they will again compete with hundreds of contestants for the most coveted titles in their industry.



Photo by Ronda Quaid

Mark Luis on Playdox Taco Peppa (left) and Phillip Ralls on A Nice Oakie Chic earned top honors at the San Lucas Ranch Cow Horse Classic last month.