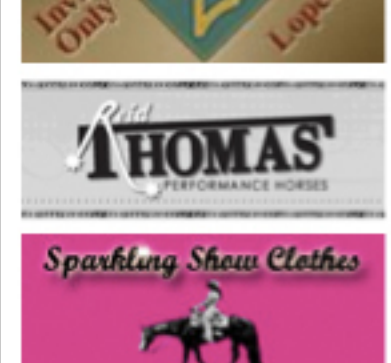
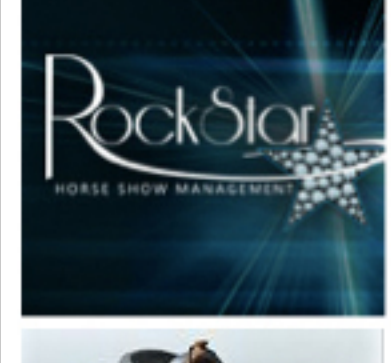
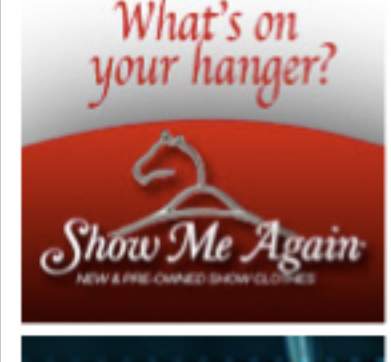
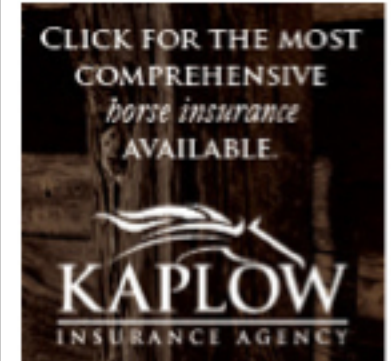


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One on One with Horse Trainer Mark Sheridan

GoHorseShow.com

Published 07/12/2011 - 10:00 a.m. CDT

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Trainer Mark Sheridan of Cave Creek, Arizona sums up his purpose and goals in the industry in a quote posted on his website, "Training horses is my passion-Educating others is my life's work."

Sheridan's success and passion for teaching is illustrated by over 28 years producing winning all around show horses. He has trained and coached four AQHYA Reserve World Champions in both English and Western Divisions and also judged all the major shows across the country and world including the AQHA World Championship Show, AQHYA World Championship Show and the All American Quarter Horse Congress. He has also trained or ridden famous horses such as Skipalong Sue, Count McChick, Bobby Black Zac, Dun Some More, Pop Top Bud, Zippos Due Claw, Krysta Belle, Mystic Illusion, Par Te Raven, Pass N Scat, and Trace of Goodbar.

GoHorseShow sat down to find out more about his background and experiences in the horse industry.

Q: Hi Mark, you sure are busy these days--with training, judging, and producing your DVD series and also climbing mountains in your past time. Thanks for taking the time to talk to us.

A: You are more than welcome!



Our family showed in the barrels, poles, and all the gymkhana classes. I started showing all-around Quarter Horse events around the age of 15. I had a really nice gelding I showed in the calf roping which was an own son of Poco Dell, and out of an own daughter of King's Pistol. I had no idea how nice of a horse he really was at the time. I wish I had twenty more just like him right now. (Pictured above famous horses, Count McChick and Bobbys Black Zac)

Q: What is it you like about the horse industry?

A: I like the fact that I can make a living working with horses. I love horses, and I love to teach. I also really enjoy spending time with all the great people I have met in the industry. I wake up in the morning thinking that I get to go to work, and not that I have to go to work!

Q: Who are some of your mentors?

A: I think that is a great question, and I would say all the people that I worked with and learned from at the University of Findlay, including Dale Wilkinson, Clark Bradley, Cindy Morehead, Brian Holmes, Mavis Hindall, Chuck Smith, and Hank Clason. After graduating from Findlay with a Bachelors of Science Degree, I had short interns with Troy Green and Tom Ryan. From there, I ended up working for Doug Lilly for five years where I really learned what hard work was all about.

Q: What are some of your favorite wins?

A: A few of them come to mind, and probably the ones I enjoy the most were the ones that my clients won. I get more enjoyment from watching my clients do well. It is fun to see all the hard work pay off. The ones that come to mind were at the 1990 Youth World where I took four kids to Tulsa, and had three Reserve World Champions and a fourth place in the Pleasure. That is a pretty hard thing to do, and we had a lot of fun. I will also always remember winning the western riding at the Congress in 1979 and thinking wow, this is a pretty cool event. Another fun win was back in the late 80's, when Jim Searles was working for me, and we went partners on a two year-old that was not halter broke, had ringworm, tail chewed off, ugly headed, and clumsy. We bought him for two thousand dollars and a couple of years later, he won the Junior Hunter Under Saddle at the Congress and ended up being Reserve World Champion Junior Hunter Under Saddle Horse at the World Show in 1988.



Mark Sheridan on Skipalong Sue. They were Congress Champions and Top 10 at the AQHA World Show in the Western Riding. Photo © Harold Campton

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Q: So tell us--where were you born, and how did you get involved with horses?

A: I was born in Hastings, Nebraska and raised on a farm where we rode horses growing up as kids. Horses have always been a part of my life.

Q: When did you start showing, and what classes or events did you show in when you first started?

A: I started showing in 4-H and open shows in Nebraska.



Q: Any memorable moments during your career that you would like to share with our readers?

A: Things that I remember the most was when I was showing horses in Nebraska as an unknown sixteen year-old kid and trying to do it on my own. Horse trainers like Bob Loomis, Joe Hayes, Mike Drennan, Bill Keyser, and Gary Campbell would always come up to me at the shows with helpful advice, tips, and encouragement. Those are times that I will never forget, and I try to help others as a result.



for me climbing a significant mountain or two a year keeps me centered when I get back to work. (Pictured above left-Mark riding Sicilian Sunrise)

Q: Why do you think you have been successful in this industry?

A: I think that four years of college with a Bachelor's Degree, six years of apprenticing, always being focused, and having a Type A personality have been the key. You need to have a survivor instinct and you must...must have a love of horses. My dad always said and continues to say that, "Hard Work Never Hurt Anybody." I also think that one needs to be able to adapt with change. Change is constant, however not falling into the trap of trends is important. Staying mentally fresh is important, and

Q: Any advice you have for young trainers?

A: Great question and first of all, go to college! Study Business, Marketing, Economics, Accounting, and Psychology. You will need all of these to help you become successful. Apprentice for five years, not five months. Learn how to develop a budget, learn what a spreadsheet is, learn how to do accounts receivables, learn to use Quicken and Quickbooks, and understand finances. Learn patience, and above all, if you don't truly love horses, get out! Take care of your equipment. I still have the same Featherlite eight horse trailer from 1987, and it looks new. Keep a lid on the overhead, work hard, remain focused, invest conservative and wisely, and learn from your mistakes. One additional thought is for all horse trainers or assistants to make sure they have health insurance. Disability insurance is a good thing as well. If you last long enough in this business, you will get hurt at some point in your career. Pay your health insurance premium before you buy that new pair of boots or that nice bit you have been wanting.

Q: Are there any changes you would like to be implemented to improve the industry?

A: I think that everything is generally headed in the right direction, however, I think that the Western Pleasure Horse, as good as it has become, still needs improvement. It is the one complaint I hear as a judge, trainer, clinician at Horse Expos, etc... The questions I constantly hear are, "Why do they go sideways?", "Why do they go so slow?", "Why do they look lame?" and, "Why are they afraid to pass?" I think there are some extremely talented trainers out there, and some incredibly good movers showing today. It would be good to see just a little more forward motion where they were close to loping at a six foot stride. They would swing their hocks from the point of the hip and point their toe more. I know that I am not the only one with this thought. Most of all the judges I talk to are thinking the same thing. It is an easy fix, and we must reward the best movers that have that nice fluid stride at the lope. (Pictured above right--Ashlee Donaldson on Krysta Belle with Jim Searles and Mark Sheridan)



Q: What do you like about being a judge?

A: I love judging horses! I feel a great responsibility in the direction of the industry to always pick the right horses and/or riders. Remaining focused all day long is the key. It does not matter if you are judging an all-novice back yard show, or judging the Congress Masters,....never, ever lose focus!

Q: How does the industry compare to when you first started your career?

A: Simply better horses, we used to take anything and train it to do anything. Now days, if it is not a great one, we send it home!

Q: What would you like your legacy to be in this industry?

A: I'm not really looking to leave a legacy or anything like that, but just trying to make a decent living, doing something I have a passion for, and along with always having the horse's best interest in mind, and that I could really teach people how to become the best riders they could be.



Q: What are your proudest accomplishments in the industry?

A: I feel we all need to be proud of what we do with our work, but for me as a single parent, it can be juggling my career and still trying to be the best dad I can be.

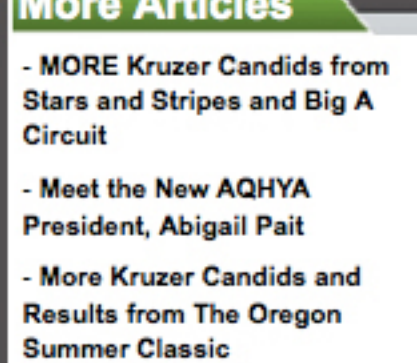
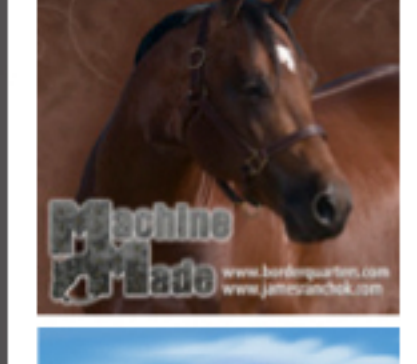
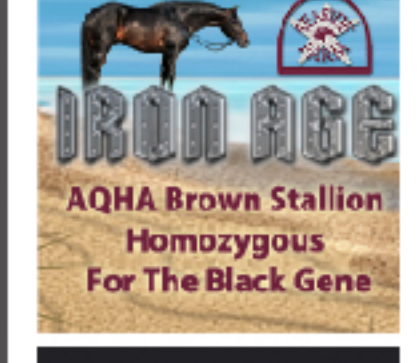
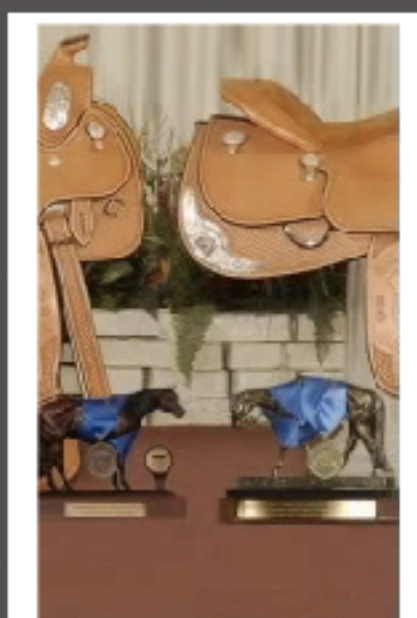
Q: Tell us about your new DVDs, and how did producing this series come about?

A: It has been a project that I have wanted to do for over ten years and I told myself, "Mark, quit talking about it and do it, damn it!" It took over two years to plan, organize the rough draft, film, edit, produce and market my product. I love to teach lead changes, and people have always told me to make a video. I told myself that if I was going to make a video, that I wanted a really good one. It gave me a lot of gray hair, but it has been an overwhelming success. I think it is all about having a passion for something, and then following through with it. I have plans for more topics that will be out soon. (Pictured left--Mark descending Mt. Rainier at 6 a.m. on a fixed line traverse in perfect weather)

Q: Thanks Mark for taking the time to talk to us!

Click here to find out more about Mark Sheridan and to order his Ultimate Lead Change series

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