

# A NEW ERA OF BARREL RACING

BY TERESA BREWER

Barrel racing continues to surge ahead as one of the fastest growing equine sports across the nation. A team event of horse and rider that requires a relationship like no other; when you get the match of that perfect horse and rider the outcome is phenomenal; like when Charmayne James won the Calgary Stampede on Chic... sensational – and the stuff of many a little girl's dream!

There is a new era arising in barrel racing with the prominent bloodlines becoming more readily available, particularly with such options as chilled or frozen semen. What do you look for? Where, or how do you start? Here, four Canadian barrel horse breeders talk about their breeding programs.



MIKE DOPEMAN

Alison Low.



Herb Krause and Docs Paradise.



Dee Butterfield.

**HERB AND MINNIE KRAUSE, DUNMORE, ALBERTA** – own Docs Paradise – sire of Jill Bishop (Besplug's) mare Chic, earner of the Calgary Stampede Barrel Racing \$50,000, three years running. He is also the sire of Debbie Renger's gelding, Reiner, who was the 2004 Calgary Stampede \$50,000 Barrel Racing Champion.

**ALISON LOW AND SHARON FERGUSSON, BLUFFTON, ALBERTA** – a mother-daughter team, standing two stallions at Old 7 Performance Horses. Their goal? "To provide ourselves and our customers with quality prospects that have what it takes to succeed in the barrel arena."

**DEE BUTTERFIELD, PONOKA, ALBERTA** – started turning the barrels by the age of 11 and still does today. Butterfield qualified for the Canadian Finals Rodeo a total of 11 times on five different horses and she has ridden many horses to futurity and derby championships.

Butterfield has been barrel racing and holding horsemanship and barrel clinics for the past 30 years. She has always raised and trained several barrel racing prospects a year and within the last 10 years her interest in breeding the barrel horse has become her focus. She stands two stallions – Perfect Possibility and Raisin the Moon. A well known stallion she stood for several years was the now-deceased Gasohol. He produced a lot of great barrel horses and is now proving to be a good broodmare sire.

Two barrel horses and one heel horse qualifying for the 2005 CFR were out of Gasohol daughters. Deana Milard's horse, Debt Adjuster is by Gasohol and was the recipient of "the horse with the most heart" voted on by pro barrel racers.

**DOUG AND CAROL SCHAFFER, BASSANO, ALBERTA** – own and operate the family-based business Sandy Ridge Stallion Station. Along with their children they have developed what was once a hobby into a full-scale breeding operation – breeding approximately 200 mares per year.

Doug and Carol define today's barrel horse as "superb athletes that exhibit speed, ability and exceptional minds."

The Schaffers stand seven stallions including three which are "race-bred": Millionaire Playboy, Fast Moon Chic and Hortons Rebel Jet, and four which are "cow-bred" including: Docs Paradise, Dudes Genuine San, Root Beers Boots and HD Smoke N Color.

**DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENCE IN THE BARREL HORSES TODAY AS OPPOSED TO 10 TO 15 YEARS AGO?**

**Dee Butterfield:** There were great barrel horses 15 years ago, but now there are even more, so your placing times can even be closer – sometimes only two-tenths of a second between first and tenth place. Over the years there has been more opportunity to study the bloodlines and evaluate what's really working for barrel racing and what crosses are most

successful. In 1979, I was running at a barrel futurity in Texas and the Lady Bugs Moon horses were standing out. That breeding is even more present today. As an example, in Martha Six Moons, the bottom side of First Down Dash was considered one of the best crosses on Jet of Honor. The pedigree is the reason behind the speed, athleticism, heart and the strong desire to rate and turn a barrel – qualities that are needed in the present day barrel horse. Most leading barrel horse sires have the evidence in their pedigree. That's why it is important to go with a pedigree that lists generations of outstanding individuals. You know they are going to be there for the long haul.

*“The barrel horse of today has to be a special athlete, with the speed of a racehorse, the ability of a reining horse to get in the ground, rate and turn and the mind to handle the tremendous pressure of competition and travel.”*

~ Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** Today there is a lot more emphasis on the breeding of barrel horses. Competitors are breeding or purchasing horses specifically for barrel racing and rightfully so; breeding increases your odds when it comes to producing a barrel horse. Like cutting or any other discipline, there are bloodlines that consistently excel. It takes a lot of time and work to develop a good barrel horse and with the number of competitors and level of competition constantly on the rise – the less you leave to chance, the better your odds of ending up with a money earner.

Our world has become a smaller place. The access to information has given us tools to raise and train better barrel horses. We've analyzed the barrel patterns, researched bloodlines, bred for performance and learned how to better care for our horses. Technology has assisted us in ways that were just not previously available.

**Carol/Doug Schaffer:** Barrel racing is much more competitive now. There are many more barrel racers and competitions. It is not unheard of to have 60-80 entries at a rodeo, or 300+ entries at a jackpot/futurity/derby. A prime example is the \$50,000 prize money offered by the famed Calgary Stampede. This sport has been perfected and there is much more to barrel racing than meets the eye. These high caliber barrel horses receive various forms of extra care for that competitive edge, indicating barrel racing is serious business. Anytime there is a high purse, it definitely increases the competition as it makes it more advantageous to travel the distance. Money draws!

Another contributing factor may be that it is much easier for the competitors and horses to travel with our modern day trucks and trailers on better roads creating a broader spectrum of competition. Barrel racing has become a weekend affair – for some a business.

Several years ago, the girls shied away from the 'knot headed race horse' for barrel racing since their minds were difficult to work with. We have seen an influx of race-bred horses in the rodeo arena with positive results. This indicates two things; the minds of the race horses have improved through selective breeding and horsemanship skills have taken a different approach.

Another change is that the girls used to phone wanting to buy a race-bred three-year-old rarely settling for a two-year-old. Quite often they requested a gelding. Now it has become even harder to find that “perfect two year old.” Many are breeding their retired proven barrel mares, purchase race-bred broodmares or buy younger horses for barrel prospects.

Also, there seems to be more mares used for barrel racing than years before. Some say that the mares are tougher, smarter and have more heart than geldings. As a matter of interest, there were 392 geldings and 266 mares entered at the 2004 Alberta Barrel Racing Association Finals.

On another note, barrel racing must be of a higher quality now as it is rarely referred to as 'can chasing' anymore. This sport is receiving the respect that it deserves! Generally barrel racing has been commonly associated with women, but lately more men are picking up the passion as well.

*“To have a real serious breeding program I think it is important to have more than one stallion or be willing to breed to outside stallions if your mare is not crossing well with yours. If you have an outstanding producing mare she will probably cross well with a number of different stallions.”*

~ Dee Butterfield

#### HOW DID YOU START BREEDING BARREL HORSES?

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** We started with training and competing in barrel races, and noticed certain bloodlines were consistently at the top. Barrel racing has become a very specialized sport, and in order to access the quality of horses we needed to be competitive, we began our own breeding program. We did a tremendous amount of research on bloodlines, and proven crosses, with focus on combining athletic ability, speed and a trainable mind.

**Herb Krause:** It was an accident that got me started on breeding barrel horses. I had a Thoroughbred rope horse mare that accidentally ended up in foal. I trained the foal and sold it for \$300, which was pretty good at the time. That is how we started.

*“Doug refers to our mares that are bred 50% race and 50% cow his '50/50 mares'. He feels that these pedigrees give us the opportunity to breed either race or cow depending on which we want to emphasize and still come up with an all-around versatile horse.”*

~ Carol Schaffer

#### WHAT IS THE GOAL OF YOUR BREEDING PROGRAM?

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** To provide ourselves and our customers with quality prospects that have what it takes to succeed in the barrel arena. We also offer an on-farm incentive program for all horses bred or purchased from Old 7. We have played a role in helping our customers sell horses in Canada and the United States and we are active in assisting and supporting barrel racing futurities and derbies in Alberta. We are excited with what the future holds.

#### HERB, HOW DID YOU END UP WITH THE GREAT CHICKLE LEE?

**Herb Krause:** I was looking for a stud that would cross with my King Leo Bar and Poco mares. I like the cross of running and performance bloodlines, which gives you speed with the ability stop and turn.

*(In his search for a sire, Krause found Chickie Book, a son of Triple Chick, and brought him to Alberta. In addition to wanting a barrel horse sire, Krause was also after a particular mare.)*

I wanted Tammy Lee, a mare who produced six ROM race horses, and I was able to pick her up at a sale in Montana.

The combination of Tammy Lee and Chickie Book produced Chickie Lee, the mare that carried Yvonne Krause to her Canadian Cowboy Association Barrel Racing title.

#### WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A BARREL PROSPECT?

**Dee Butterfield:** I would not look at a prospect if he did not have the papers that said he had potential to be a successful barrel horse, but he must also have the conformation that says the same thing. I would not accept one over the other. This is still not a guarantee of a winner, but it stacks the deck in your favor.

Questionable ground conditions have been an issue with barrel racing since the event was started and unfortunately will



continue to be. If you want a horse that will be a consistent winner and enjoy a long career, your chances are better if you start with a horse that has very balanced conformation and handles himself in a very balanced manner. This of course, can be enhanced with a very good training program.

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** We like the Bugs Alive In 75, Easy Jet, Jet of Honor, Pacific Bailey and Dash For Cash bloodlines. The characteristics we look for are a balanced individual, structurally correct with good, long muscling (rather than the "bunchy" type of muscles) and just as importantly – a willing attitude and heart. A horse with heart will give you his all whereas the next horse may look like the perfect barrel horse but if his heart isn't in it, he will never truly excel.

**Doug/Carol Schaffer:** Proven Quarter Horse and Paint bloodlines throughout United States and Canada such as Dash For Cash, Special Effort, Tinys Gay and a few other leading barrel families.

**WHAT KIND OF BARREL HORSES DO YOU BELIEVE YOU PRODUCE?**

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** Horses with athletic ability, speed and the mind to handle the pressure. Raising a horse with proven bloodlines, we believe, increases your odds of producing a barrel horse. We are confident in our stallions' ability to sire superior offspring. At the same time, we believe the mare is just as important as the stallion. Our select band of broodmares are daughters and granddaughters of Jet of Honor, Bunny Bid, Firewater Flit, and Jet Payday.

**WHY ARE YOU IN THE BARREL HORSE BREEDING BUSINESS?**

**Doug/Carol Schaffer:** We do not feel that we are in the barrel horse breeding business as per say. With our broodmares, we are in the business of trying to breed a good all-around useable Quarter Horse with speed. We feel that there is a market for this type of horse and this is the type of horse we enjoy.

As for our stallions, we like to offer a broad spectrum of stallions. Not all mares work on the same type of stallion and not all customer goals and dreams are the same. Therefore, with a variety of stallions, we have a greater chance of meeting our customers' demands.

**WHAT IS THE MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD WITH YOUR BUSINESS?**

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** It is hard to pinpoint a specific occasion; we have had the privilege of meeting so many good people through our breeding and training program. As a mother-daughter team, we have always enjoyed traveling and

competing and now have the added enjoyment of watching our third generation compete on our horses.

**WHY DO YOU LOVE BARREL RACING?**

**Dee Butterfield:** I love barrel racing because it is an ongoing challenge. It doesn't matter how long a person is doing it there is always more to learn and experience to gain; whether it is from the people you help or the horses you ride."

**Alison Low/Sharon Fergusson:** We train all of our barrel horses and the thrill of working with that horse; feeling them gain

confidence and want to work for you is one of the most enjoyable experiences a trainer can have. It requires a tremendous amount of patience and persistence but the final, finished horse; the one where you become partners with him and are able to just let him do the job that you trained him for is a real feeling of accomplishment.


**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Dee Butterfield Performance Horses  
www.deebutterfield.com

Old 7 Performance Horses, www.northernhorse.com/old7

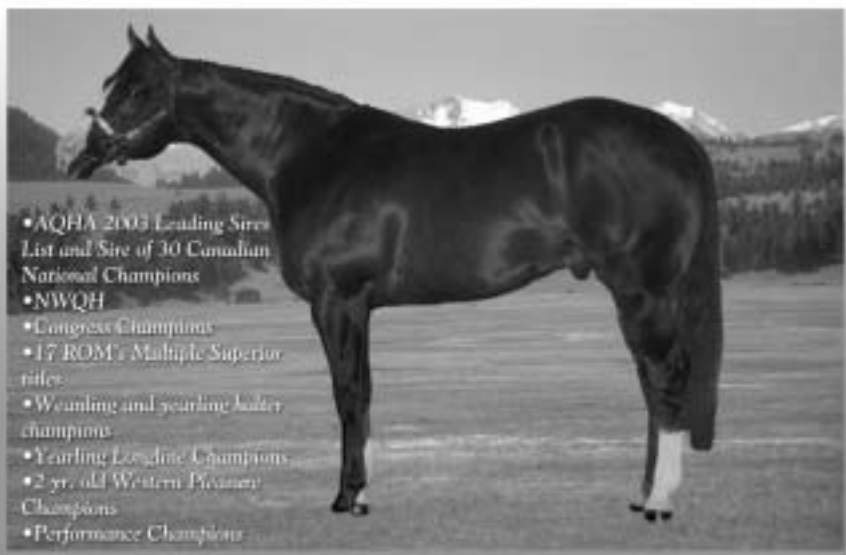
Sandy Ridge Stallion Station, www.sandyridge.ab.ca

# Romancin the Rose



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