

Swales brothers clean up in Working Cow Horse Classic



John Swales of Millarville, Alta., was a double winner in the Stampede's Working Cow Horse Classic on Sunday, claiming the Open Bridle and Open Hackamore classes under the Big Top.

"I was just very happy with both horses I rode," said John. "They just wanted to be good, both of them. Everything has to fall together. You need a good cow, and the horse has to want to be good that day. I'm very happy."

The Stampede's Working Cow Horse Classic celebrates the tradition and heritage of the Spanish vaqueros in California back to the early 18th century. Horse-and-rider teams were judged on their authority, discipline and precision in two distinct areas -- their reined work, or dry work, and their cow work, otherwise known as fence work.

Reined work is based on a predetermined pattern of manoeuvres, including figure-eights, straight runs, sliding stops and 360-degree spins. Cow work, the truly exciting part of the show, sees the horse-and-rider team first box a steer, then send it at full tilt along the fence, heading it off and turning it both ways, before finally circling it once in each direction in the centre of the arena.

The Stampede's Working Cow Horse Classic hosts bridle and hackamore divisions for fully-trained horses and four- and five-year-olds, respectively, with open, non-pro and novice designations for various levels of rider experience.

Calgary -- It wasn't quite a Swales sweep, but it was close.

Brothers John and Clint Swales, reined cow horse trainers from just south of Calgary, ended up taking three of six class titles Sunday afternoon as the Calgary Stampede's Working Cow Horse Classic wrapped up under the Big Top.

"A really good day," grinned Clint, 25, who lives in High River, Alta. "We get to take all kinds of stuff home."

John, 33, of Millarville, Alta., captured his fifth career Open Bridle title at the Stampede aboard Smart Miss Wolf to go with an Open Hackamore crown riding Maximum Echo, picking up winner's cheques of \$2,040 and \$1,860, respectively. Meanwhile, Clint, 25, not to be outdone, scooped up the Limited Open Bridle class on Pure Latigo, a win worth \$460.



John Swales and Smart Miss Wolf, an eight-year-old American quarter horse mare, had thrown down the gauntlet during Friday's first round of Open Bridle action with a 149.5-point ride. None of the other nine teams could overcome the deficit Sunday -- not even Jesse Thomson of Longview, Alta., who posted the best score of the day, 147, and still placed second overall with 292 points to John Swales' 295.5.

"John's my neighbour. We go back and forth quite a bit, so if anybody's going to win, I'm glad it's him," said Thomson, whose reserve champion, or runner-up, finish was worth \$1,700.

Thomson, aboard Xayda Zan Parr, was also runner-up to John Swales in Open Hackamore, finishing tied for second place with Dale Clearwater of Hanley, Sask., aboard Bobby Jo Rooster. Donna O'Reilly, of Millarville, won the Limited Open Hackamore class on Caught a Smarty.

"John cushioned me on Friday," noted Thomson. "I needed a little more on Friday. But that's the way it goes. It all depends on what cow you get."

A terrific tandem was crowned Non-Pro Bridle champion. Suzon Schaal of Millarville and her six-year-old quarter horse mare, Genuine Brown Gal, turned in a stellar score of 146 Sunday for a two-round aggregate of 290, nipping Terri Holowath of Cayley, Alta., and Precision Dee by a solitary point.

"She's a perfect match for me," said Schaal, who collected \$1,140 in winnings in her Stampede debut. "We get along really well. She's always very co-operative and very honest. She's pretty good in both disciplines. She's a really hard stopper, and she really likes to work a cow."

Holowath and Precision Dee, a nine-year-old quarter horse gelding, scored an eyebrow-raising 75 in cow work Sunday, jumping from fourth overall after the first round to the reserve champion's spot.

"He's a family horse," said Holowath. "My husband Bart won a year-end on him. Our son Colt has won a year-end on him. Our other son Remington ranch-ropes on him. He's just an awesome, steady horse. Whatever you want him to do, he does."

Schaal and Holowath ended up winning the grand champion and reserve champion titles in Novice Non-Pro Bridle, as well.

The fourth-place finish in Non-Pro Bridle authored by Ron Mathison allowed the Calgarian to clinch the Stampede's inaugural Elite Western Rider Award, created in celebration of the show's three Western Performance Horse events (Working Cow Horse, Team Cattle Penning and the Cutting Horse Competition).

Mathison won the Elite Western Rider Award, which comes with a handcrafted Stampede belt buckle, by posting two Top-10 finishes in Western Performance Horse events. He'd also finished fourth in the 14 Class final of the Team Cattle Penning competition on Friday, July 3.

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