

Avila Takes Championship

This year's National Reined Cow Horse Association World's Greatest Horseman is Bob Avila riding Light N Fine.

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As the Fort Dodge Animal Celebration of Champions came to an end Feb. 25, this year's National Reined Cow Horse Association World's Greatest Horseman was announced. Bob Avila of Temecula, Calif., earned the 2007 World's Greatest Horseman at the Lone Star Arena in Stephenville, Texas.

Avila teamed up with Alan and Kay Needle's Light N Fine to win the championship and a check for \$30,000. Light N Fine, a Grays Starlight stallion out of Lenas Fine Freckle, is a former NRCHA Stakes Open Champion and Open Derby Reserve Champion. The horse has remarkable earnings from previous cow horse competitions and has won his fair share of titles. After the winning this title, Avila decided it would be Light N Fine's last.

"This is the end of his career right here; he's retired," Avila states. "He deserved a big title and this is it. I'll let him ride into the sunset with this one."

In the 28-horse prelims, Light N Fine placed fourth in both herd and rein work, seventh in steer stopping and third in cow work. He returned to the clean-slate finals to win the championship by a half point.

In the World's Greatest Horseman competition, each team competes in herd work, rein work, steer stopping and cow work in the preliminaries, which take place over three days. After a day off, the top 10 return to the arena to compete in all four events again – this time in one day.

"We all say it's the event we love to hate," Avila says. "It's so nerve racking."

Avila is a three-time NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity Open Champion, an NRHA Open Futurity Champion and one of only four NRCHA Million Dollar Riders. In 2000, he won the World's Greatest Horseman title riding Paid By Chic.

Shawn Hays of Saint Jo, Texas, finished reserve with Shine Smartly – a Shining Spark mare out of Smartly Dressed, owned by his wife, Tammy, and father-in-law Walter Greeman.

For complete results from the NRCHA Fort Dodge Animal Health Celebration of Champions, which included the Circle Y Ranch Derby, the World Championship Show and World's Greatest Horseman, visit www.nrcha.com.