

Guy Woods Wins Extreme Mustang Challenge

The seasoned veteran takes the top spot in a challenge to gentle wild Mustangs.

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Trainer Guy Woods with Max, winners of the Extreme Mustang Challenge

Guy Woods, who trains cutting horses out of Double E Ranches in Texas, took the challenge and won: He was the most successful at gentling a wild Mustang after 100 days of training during the Extreme Mustang Challenge.

Making the decision to take on the Extreme Mustang Makeover challenge wasn't a hard one for Woods, even though more than one of his cutting horse friends raised a skeptical eyebrow. "I wanted to do this because I thought it would be fun," he said. "When I left Australia and came to America, I was the top-ranked youth rider in Victoria. Riding in this competition made me feel like a kid again."

The Extreme Mustang Challenge began months ago, with an invitation to every horse trainer in America asking them if they would like to participate in a test of horsemanship and an opportunity to win \$25,000 in prize money.

Once the list of Extreme Mustang Challenge participants was narrowed to 100, the Mustang Heritage Foundation, in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and the Nevada Wild Horse and Burro Commission, brought 100 wild Mustangs from the Nevada hills to the Fallon BLM holding facility in Nevada and the Pauls Valley facility south of Oklahoma City. The Mustangs were all similar in age, size and condition.

The participating trainers picked up their Mustangs from either the Fallon or Pauls Valley facility during the week of June 6-9, 2007. They had until Sept. 22, 2007 to train their mounts. On that date, the trainers competed with their Mustangs at the Will Rogers Equestrian Center in Fort Worth, Texas. The trainers and their horses were judged on conditioning, groundwork and a "horse course," which represented maneuvers and obstacles found in trail and recreational riding situations.

"When I first saw Max, I was in line to pick up my horse and all the horses I saw were wild, but they were loading pretty smoothly," Woods says. "But when Max came through, he went into the chute and tried to come out the other side. I said load him."

Woods, who has professionally trained cutting horses for almost 30 years and has won numerous National Cutting Horse Association honors, worked with Max at the end of almost every day after riding 15 other horses. "I'd work him after I got all my other horses ridden and for the first 60 days or so, it was challenging and a lot of fun. Then for the last 40 days, it was a matter of keeping him ridden and fine tuning a lot of the things we'd worked on."

The Mustang Heritage Foundation (MHF), in partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), created the Extreme Mustang Makeover event to highlight the recognized value of Mustangs through the national training competition.

All Mustangs that participated in the Extreme Mustang Makeover were available for adoption on September 23. The horse that fetched the highest adoption fee was Hail Yeah ridden by Norco, Calif.-trainer Ray Ariss. Hail Yeah was adopted for \$50,000, which makes him the highest-priced Mustang in the history of the BLM's adoption program. Partnering on the fee was the City of Norco, Calif., represented by Mayor Harvey Sullivan and the MHF.

Ariss, who trains mostly Andalusians and Friesians for dressage, went off pattern during the horse course and received a zero for that portion of the competition.

"I hated that I didn't have the opportunity to show the judges what this horse could really do," Ariss says. "I've been in a lot of competitions and this one was different because it was definitely not about me. I knew there was some really good horsemen here and that I would need to step up and compete."

Ariss says he was pleasantly surprised by the high adoption fee for Hail Yeah. Sullivan, who traveled to Fort Worth to support Ariss and Hail Yeah, says that Hail Yeah will be the official mascot of Norco.

In addition to prize money, trainers were reimbursed up to \$500 for costs related to hauling, training and medical expenses for the Mustangs in training. Trainers also received 15 percent commission on the amount of the adoption bids exceeding \$200.

Extreme Mustang Makeover Freestyle Finals

1. Guy Woods, Pilot Point, Texas, riding Max. Score 288.
2. Kitty Lauman, Prineville, Oregon, riding Ranger. Score 284.5.
3. Zane Davis, Whitehall, Montana, riding Algore. Score 279.5.
4. Eviga Aunina, Rock Springs, Wyoming, riding Wellington. Score 274.5.
5. Dwight Bilyk, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, riding J4. Score 270.5.
6. Bill Lopez, Norman, Oklahoma, riding Vegas, Score 265.5.
7. Holly Davis, Whitehall, Montana, riding Chopper. Score 260.
8. Nick Bowman, of Sanborn, Indiana, riding Willie, Score 259.5.
9. Cody Keller, of Noma, Iowa, riding Trooper. Score 243.5.
10. Robin Secrist, Alma, Wisconsin, riding Buster. Score 243.
11. Roeliff Annon, Alcalde, New Mexico, riding Nick. Score 242.5.
12. Jeremy Dunn, Rosamond, California, riding Ojos. Score 237.
13. Steve Hayden, Griffin, Georgia, riding Hampton. Score 221.5.