

Chris Cox Repeats his Road to the Horse Win

After two days of competition, Cox emerges as top horseman.

Defending champion Chris Cox of Mineral Wells, Texas, emerged victorious at his second Road to the Horse competition with his win March 2 at the Tennessee Miller Coliseum in Murfreesboro. Cox is the only competitor other than Clinton Anderson to win back-to-back championships. Along with taking the title, Cox also received a \$15,000 donation toward his charity, The Imus Cattle Ranch for Kids with Cancer from Fort Dodge Animal Health. The winning horse was WR Shinosmoke by Shining King Cody out of Alamosa.

The competition among the four horsemen--Tommy Garland, Ken McNabb, Mike Kevil and Chris Cox--was neck-and-neck until the moment the winning envelope was opened. Top judges Robert M. Miller, D.V.M., Jack Brainard, James Gholson, Terry Crofoot and Toni Warvell took in the action over the two-day event and, even into the last minutes of competition, felt it was any man's game.

"None of us knew where it was going to go," Warvell says. "It was so close. The clinicians were spectacular in the short-go. I was just very impressed."

The Road to the Horse competition tests trainers' horsemanship skills by having them work with green horses over a two-day period. The trainer who most successfully gentles his assigned horse by the end of the competition is deemed the winner.

Four 3-year-old American Quarter Horse geldings from Arkansas's Wood Ranch were used for this year's competition, and they proved challenging. McNabb and Kevil, a former judge, had two of the most impressive turnarounds going into day two, and both clinicians left the arena with standing ovations after the obstacle course round.

"It is absolutely amazing the feel that these gentlemen have developed over the years," says celebrity host Larry Mahan. "They are a great group of clinicians. It was a beautiful thing."

According to host Rick Lamb one of the main aspects of Road to the Horse is learning to stay flexible and adjusting to fit the situation. This year, learning to adjust played a big part in the clinician's tactics. When day two began, Cox was the underdog and adjusted his program after the judges instilled a 10 minute time penalty at the beginning of the second round because he did not rest his horse for the required time during round one.

"The thing about horsemanship is that you have to learn how to adjust," Cox said during his obstacle course round. "This colt has come a long way."

One of the weekend's biggest surprises was the announcement of John Lyons as a competitor in 2009.

For more information about Road to the Horse, visit www.roadtothehorse.com.