



Poppino Tickled with Snake River Win

by Jolee Lautaret
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Nampa, Idaho-For Tana Poppino, 2011 has been a long year. After a third Wrangler National Finals Rodeo qualification in 2010, Poppino and her great bay gelding Amigo, aka Perryman Star, have struggled to find their championship form in 2011.

"It's been a long year," Poppino agrees. "When you have \$250 won after Houston, you know it's been real slow."

Amigo is 16 years young this year, competing against horses sometimes a third of his age. The tough son of Peryman Doc out of Misty Star Rhine has had his share of injuries in the past including a season ending injury in 2008. After a stone cold winter, Poppino found that her partner was very sore.

"We had some muscle work done on him after Houston," she says, adding that the work has helped Amigo return to stride. Since Houston, Poppino has won big or not at all, an up and down streakiness not at all characteristic of the super consistent Amigo. But on the strength of big wins like Corpus Christi, Texas, and Greeley, Colo., she has climbed into the top 45 of the WPRA world standings.

"Our timing has been bad. We keep knocking barrels over; he's not being bad but we are clipping barrels," says Poppino.

By the final weeks of July, Amigo and Poppino seem to be finding their rhythm once again. A big check from the Sheridan WYO Rodeo led Poppino into the Snake River Stampede in Nampa, Idaho on a high note. She ran in the Monday morning slack, leaving the rodeo winning third.

With a full week and five performances to go, Poppino didn't know what to expect for returning to the Saturday night short go. She went on to Cheyenne, where she placed fourth in the first go round, and to Woodward, Oklahoma, back home in the Prairie Circuit where she serves as the WPRA's circuit director.

Poppino made her way back 1,300 miles to Nampa for the short round after finishing sixth in the opening round. Just sixteen one-hundredths of a second separated the 12 short round qualifiers.

"That's not much time but it's hard to make up time in a building," Poppino says, an endorsee for MAXX Sunglasses, Professional's Choice, Cowboy Rigs, Total Health Enhancement, and EquiPride. She and Amigo have made the short round in the Idaho Center before but had a "terrible run."

So Saturday night became about redemption. Amigo laid out the fastest run of the week in the short go, a blistering 15.77 that eclipsed the field by nearly two tenths. When others struggled, Poppino's name came to the top of the average as well.

"Nampa is a place I've always thought Amigo should do well," she says. "It's nice to come back and redeem ourselves after the last time."

"He made a nice run; I was really tickled to have a good run in the short go. It was one of those runs that you think is good, but you don't know because you can't hear anything. All we knew back there was that they were hitting lots of barrels. The short go kind of fell apart"

Although she avoided the penalty blues, Brenda Mays, the first round winner with her 15.84 second run, also struggled in the short round. With 2010 AQHA/WPRA Horse of the Year Jethro running hot, it had looked like all roads to a championship in Nampa would run through Mays.

Among those with penalty blues was Brenda Mays, the first round winner with her 15.84 second run. With 2010 AQHA/WPRA Horse of the Year Jethro running hot, it looked like all roads to a championship in Nampa would have to run through Mays.

"Brenda had such a nice run in the first round," says Poppino. "I figured she would be tough to beat. I figured we would just make our run and see how it turns out."

"I thank the good Lord that it came our way."

With earnings of \$9,046, Poppino is "glad I drove all the way back to Nampa" from Woodward. The earnings pushed her season total up over \$30,000, giving her and Amigo a chance at making it back to Las Vegas once again.

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"I have to say thanks to Dean [Oliver, past President of the Snake River Stampede] and his crew, the ground was very good for us and obviously stayed very consistent throughout the week. I think girls made it back to the finals from just about every performance. They did a good job."

For now, Poppino is taking her "mid-summer break," spending time in Deadwood with her husband, Marty, a PRCA steer roper.

"Yeah, I get to see my husband in the summer," she laughs, adding that she always takes three or four days to "chill out" after being on the road so many days. She and Amigo are back up at Cheyenne on Saturday.

As for her prospects for the rest of 2011, Poppino is feeling much better this week.

"Finally, this week, our timing has got a lot better. Now we'll just keep going."

For more information about the Snake River Stampede, visit them on-line at www.snakeriverstampede.com.

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