

# On Top of the World

► Oen and Terlip claim Josey titles in Marshall, Texas.

Article by Savannah Magoteaux Photos by Stefanie Yoder



Josey Reunion 1D Champion Pete Oen and Holdinalltheseises.

**T**HERE'S SOMETHING UNDENIABLY EXTRAORDINARY ABOUT THE JOSEY RANCH. It could be the positive atmosphere or the picturesque setting amongst the innumerable pine trees. Perhaps it's the numerous opportunities for education around every corner, or the friendly staff who are avail-

able any time of day or night. Or maybe it's the unspoken, but well-known and understood invitation to all barrel racers. "Come ride with us," it says.

Regardless of the reason, the Josey Ranch has become a mecca for barrel racing, and there is no better time to experience the "Josey magic" than during the first two weekends in May. The first weekend features the Josey

Reunion, a homecoming for Josey students, while the second weekend spotlights future stars in the Josey Jr. World Championships.

## Oen and Holdinalltheseises Win Reunion Title

It's been 23 years since a futurity-age horse or a man has won the Josey Reunion, but that changed on the first Sunday in May when Pete Oen and Holdinalltheseises posted the fastest time of the weekend and claimed the 1D championship.

In the days leading up to the event, it looked like "Rolex" might not be able to compete. While having a shoe fixed in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, at the Better Barrel Races World Championships, he stepped sideways into farrier Carl Sabin's anvil, resulting in a slight puncture to the skin.

"We didn't think much of it because it was just a little poke through the skin, and he was sound. I went ahead and ran him, then took him home for a few days of rest before going to Josey's," Oen recalls. When he went to pull Rolex out of his stall in Marshall, Texas, the gelding wasn't walking so good.

"I freaked out and called his vet, Don Lee, of XX Equine. He said he probably had a sub-cutaneous skin infection," Oen says. "We started him on antibiotics and by the second day he was walking much better. I went ahead and entered him, because I knew I could scratch him if he wasn't sound to run, but I didn't want to miss the chance to compete on him if he was."

By the first round Rolex was feeling good and ready to go. Unfortunately, he drew up during a torrential rainfall.

"All but one of my horses drew up after it started to rain. It was coming down so hard I couldn't even see the first barrel from the alleyway. They were all young horses, and Ryann (Pedone) talked me into going ahead and running them," he says with a laugh.

The second go-round went much better. Oen and Rolex led the round

with a 16.3 until Dana Haas and TWR She Steal Famous stole the lead with a 16.0, pushing all but Oen and Blaise Bercegeay on Running For A Title out of the 1D.

The Reunion finals order runs slowest qualifying time to fastest, with the exception of if someone qualified in both rounds. In that case, the first go time is used to determine the draw order. Haas had qualified in the 3D in the first go, leaving Oen and Rolex as the fastest 1D qualifiers, in turn, last to run in the finals.

"Because of the way the alley is off set, you can see a lot more of the crowd when you look up than you do the arena while you are waiting your turn. With Rolex and I being the last ones to run, when I looked up I saw everyone staring at us. It was crazy! I took a deep breath, focused on making my run, and let Rolex run to the first barrel." Oen says, "Sometimes I advise myself and other people that if you don't think you can actually win the race to just go in and make a good, solid run and see where it ends up instead of pushing your horse to do something they can't, but I know Rolex has what it takes to win. So I told myself to go for the win!"

When Holdinalltheseises turned the first barrel with his signature style, the crowd cheered.

"He stepped in a little at the second barrel, but I got around it pretty good, and he never slowed down around the third barrel," Oen says. "We were running home and I wasn't sure if it would be fast enough to win. When we crossed the timer I heard everyone start screaming, and when I heard the announcer say 15.8 I was shocked."

Holdinalltheseises is by Tres Seis out of Bountiful Bootie by Spanish Boot. Shoppa Ranch of Decatur, Texas owns him. He was started on the barrels by one of Oen's best friends and fellow trainer, Ryann Pedone.

"I got a call from Ryann and she told me about this horse. She said she didn't fit with him and the Shoppas

were going to sell him, and asked if I could ride him and market him," Oen explains.

Within a couple weeks of getting the colt to his ranch, Oen thought Rolex could be special.

"I called Ryann and said I liked him, and she told me that if I wanted to keep him to run in the futurities that would be OK and that I'd enjoy riding for the Shoppas," he says. "I got him about 60 days before the juvenile at Oklahoma City, and ran him there. Then we went to the Arizona futurities where he won third in the slot race and placed in a go-round, and followed that with the LG Pro Classic where he also placed in the average and second in a go-round. I think to date he has won nearly \$20,000."

This isn't the only success story for Pedone and Oen. His standout mount in 2015, Hip Swingin Gypsy, whose 2015 earnings exceeded \$100,000 and included an American Quarter Horse Association Reserve World Championship, and Old Fort Days Futurity Reserve Championship, was bred and raised by Pedone.

"Ryann always looks out for the horse and has been a great sport about

it. We have been friends for several years now and we ride together often. We ride differently and I think that's why something that doesn't work for her can work for me, and vice versa," he says.

Growing up as a young boy in Ohio, Oen had heard of the legendary Martha Josey. He started out his barrel racing career borrowing his grandfather's truck and a two-horse trailer from a family friend, honing his training skills on free ponies and buying reject reining horses.

"I think people sometimes think some of us are spoiled, but I started from the bottom with nothing when it came to the horses. I had always dreamed of getting to meet Martha, or even going to her ranch. I never thought I would be able to attend anything she did, or, better yet, compete and win," Oen says. "It's all been about setting a goal or a dream, and chasing it."

Even though those early days of riding castoffs have long past – Oen now has Equi-Stat earnings exceeding \$636,000 – winning the Reunion was still special.

"I'm still a little in shock. It made it even cooler when I found out that it was the first time that the Reunion had been won by a man or a futurity



Josey Reunion  
2D Champion  
Shea-lynn  
Leach and  
Berthas Dancer.



## [ Josey Junior World & Reunion ]

colt since Ty Mitchell won the very first one," Oen says, emphasizing the win wouldn't have occurred without Pedone.

"I owe a lot to Ryann. It's because of her that I've had my standout horses from both this year and last. We are friends and bounce ideas off each other all the time. I also thank the Shoppas, as they've been great to ride for. They trust my judgment on this horse and believe in my decisions. Thank you also to Don Lee with XX Equine for keeping this horse at his best.

"It's definitely not all about me," Oen adds. "It is a total team effort from everyone involved in my program. My sister Stacy Graves is my right hand and the barn manager. She takes care of everything while I'm gone. Tyler Rivette is my biggest supporter and so positive, and Christina McKenzie, who is my current intern, is one of the best I've ever had. Thank you to my family for supporting me."

Oen also made sure to include his loyal sponsors, adding a thank you to Dale Steege and MVP Products, Jyme Nichols with Bluebonnet Feeds, Josh Harvey with Outlaw Equine, and Tonda Collins and Geoffrey Litton with EquiResp.

### Leach Wins 2D Championship

Thanks to some acrobatic moves in the finals while rounding the third barrel, Shea-lynn Leach evaded a five-second penalty to win the 2D championship with a 16.379.

"She (Berthas Dancer) felt good and I was ready to make my run. When I went in there she stepped off the first barrel a little bit, and I felt her short me on the second," Leach explains.

Having ridden the mare since 2011, Leach knew to expect her horse to really shut down for the third barrel as well.

"When we turned the third barrel it was almost down to the ground. I

don't know what was going through my head that made me decide to do it, but I hung off the side and flipped it back up," she says. "By the grace of God it stayed up once I pushed it. I was happy with where we ended up, especially with the save on the third barrel."

Leach, of Gunter, Texas, and Berthas Dancer can typically be found at the top of the 1D, and in fact won the first go of the Reunion with a 16.4.

"I had high expectations, and when I ran her in there she smoked all three barrels, but I didn't think we were running that hard. I had made up my mind that it wasn't going to hold, but then the bottom fell out of the sky and it poured the rest of the day. I made the decision to draw out of the second go and save her for the finals," she says.

Leach won the Josey reserve title in 2003, and then her parents gifted her with Berthas Dancer as a high school graduation present in 2011. "She doesn't

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