

# First AT LAST

## Reygans Smart Lena prevails during his final shot for Derby stardom.

Article by Jessica Harms • Action photos by Primo Morales

The 2011 National Reined Cow Horse Association Derby, held Oct. 27-30 at the Horseshoe Park and Equestrian Centre in Queen Creek, Ariz., was a last shot, of sorts, for Reygans Smart Lena. Though talented to the brim, the 5-year-old Dual Rey stallion had yet to top the roster in any major limited-age events with trainer Ron Emmons during the previous two years. The horse's owner, Doug Granade, an NRCHA competitor since 2002, could relate.

A major win had previously eluded Granade as well, but the luck of both horse and rider all changed at the Derby, when the horse known as "Rey" won the Open and Intermediate Open with Emmons, and Granade picked up three titles in the Non-Pro. Emmons also won the Holy Cow Performance Horses Open Bridle Spectacular on Olena Oak to top the group's success. Some may say the stars were aligned, but Granade felt there was a greater presence in Queen Creek that had the backs of the whole team.

### Derby Open

**Emmons and Reygans Smart Lena** (Dual Rey x Smart Fancy Lena x Smart Little Lena) warmed up with a safe 216.5 in the herd work preliminaries and followed up with a 221.5 in the rein work, which took the lead even after Emmons was hit with a half-point penalty for trotting out of a transition. They finished up with a 217.5 in the fence work to secure a slot in the Derby Open finals.

Once there, it was the fence work that took home the glory for Emmons and Reygans Smart Lena. They pulled a 217 out of the herd work and a 218 in the rein work, but they saved the best for last when they blasted the crowd with a 228-point run down the fence.

Emmons said when his cow came out, he didn't foresee it being a winning contender right off the bat, but once the boxing was complete, the opponent stepped up to the plate.

"It was just a tough run. The

cow gave me a little more than I was expecting, he said of the Mexican steer, which is the type Emmons was raised working out on the West Coast. The way he was boxing, I thought he was going to be kind of a puff going down the fence, but he wasn't. Once he got going, he ran hard and tried to get away from me, but there was no chance he was getting away."

### Close to home

The victory for Reygans Smart Lena was more than a crisp paycheck and bragging rights for Granade. It was solidification for his late wife's belief in the horse's potential when she first saw him and a symbol of her love for horses and the sport.

Through tears and laughter, Granade recalled the trip to Fort Worth, Texas, when they purchased Reygans Smart Lena. In the market for a 2-year-old, Emmons



Reygans Smart Lena earned the first title of his career at the 2011 NRCHA Derby with Ron Emmons. The horse, bred by Strawn Valley Ranch, Strawn, Texas, was purchased at the 2008 NCHA Futurity Sale by Doug Granade, after his late wife, Cindy, insisted he buy the horse.

### NRCHA DERBY

Queen Creek, AZ — Oct. 27-30, 2011  
192 Entries — \$178,000 Added — \$366,335 Total Purse  
Event/Horse/Rider/Owner/Pedigree/Breeder/Score/Money

#### DERBY OPEN

<b>Reygans Smart Lena</b>	<b>Ron Emmons</b>	<b>Doug G &amp; Cindy M Granade</b>
06S (Dual Rey x Smart Fancy Lena x Smart Little Lena)		
<b>Strawn Valley Ranch</b>		<b>663 \$30,161</b>

#### INTERMEDIATE OPEN

<b>Reygans Smart Lena</b>	<b>Ron Emmons</b>	<b>Doug G &amp; Cindy M Granade</b>
06S (Dual Rey x Smart Fancy Lena x Smart Little Lena)		
<b>Strawn Valley Ranch</b>		<b>663 \$6,825</b>

#### LIMITED OPEN

<b>Noras Nitro</b>	<b>E.J. Laubscher</b>	<b>Teresa D Webb</b>
07M (Nitro Dual Doc x Nora Lena x Doc O'Lena)		
<b>Black Rock Ranch LLC</b>		<b>635.5 \$4,390</b>

#### LEVEL 1 OPEN

<b>IX Smart Starlight</b>	<b>Matt Hoekenga</b>	<b>Elizabeth Younger</b>
06G (Dox White Rabbit x Amys Pic x Fairleas Dandy Pic)		
<b>Charles Amos</b>		<b>634.5 \$1,338</b>

#### OPEN NOVICE HORSE

<b>Zackly Right Time</b>	<b>Tom Neel</b>	<b>Margo McKinney</b>
06G (Peptotime x Zacks Nu Star x Zack T Wood)		
<b>David &amp; Clare Capps</b>		<b>651 \$3,255</b>

#### NON-PRO

<b>Oaks Dual Rey</b>	<b>Carol Roberts</b>	<b>Carol Roberts</b>
07G (TR Dual Rey x Docs Pearly Oak x Doc's Oak)		
<b>Jamie Traiteur</b>		<b>649 \$11,908</b>

#### INTERMEDIATE NON-PRO

<b>Oaks Dual Rey</b>	<b>Carol Roberts</b>	<b>Carol Roberts</b>
07G (TR Dual Rey x Docs Pearly Oak x Doc's Oak)		
<b>Jamie Traiteur</b>		<b>649 \$3,713</b>

#### AMATEUR

<b>Soula Jule Girl</b>	<b>Heather Livingston</b>	<b>Rory &amp; Heather Livingston</b>
06M (Soula Jule Star x Okies Hickory Girl x Doc's Hickory)		
<b>James &amp; Gay Ver Steeg</b>		<b>642.5 \$1,470</b>

#### OPEN BRIDLE

<b>Olena Oak</b>	<b>Ron Emmons</b>	<b>Mel Smith &amp; Nichole Scott</b>
02S (Smart Chic Olena x Fritzes Oak E Doakie x Doc's Oak)		
<b>David Nogle</b>		<b>664 \$28,500</b>

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and Granade had at least 10 prospects they were busy sizing up and getting vetted when Cindy asked them to look at another one that T.J. and Ashley Good had brought to her attention.

“The auction started, and she came back and said, ‘Did you ever look at that horse?’ I said, ‘No,’ and she drug us over there by our shirts,” Granade said.

Upon inspection, both Emmons and Granade agreed that Reygans Smart Lena was in fact just what they were looking for. During the sale, Granade passed on the others he’d looked at and waited for Reygans Smart Lena to come in. He laughed about giving Cindy and Emmons quite a scare by not bidding on him until the last minute.

“I scared them because I didn’t bid on him until the very last bid,” Granade recalled about the \$39,000 purchase. “She gave me an elbow and said, ‘You better buy him!’ She had a silent way of getting her way. She was pretty instrumental in getting that horse bought.”

Because of Cindy’s special ties to the horse, Granade said he holds a special place in his heart. Wins or no wins, Reygans Smart Lena will remain in the Granade household.

“It’s a very strong emotion that I carry with me and the reason why I’ll probably never be able to get rid of that horse,” he said. “Ron and I have a bond with that horse through her that will probably never go away. It makes this win even tougher to celebrate, but even more special to have it happen that way. It’s why my name will always be on that horse’s papers.”

## Non-Pro Bridle

**It will be** one year ago in April since the tragic accident that took Cindy’s life. Initially, following the loss of his wife of 36 years, Granade took a hiatus from showing himself.

“I kind of lost my buddy and my partner. It took the wind out of me. It’s hard to explain, but she was a lot of my inspiration to do this. You don’t just go on. When you hear



**Doug Granade, owner of Derby Open Champion Reygans Smart Lena, rode Wright On Ned (Lenas Wright On x Smart Sally x Smart Chic Olena) to win the Non-Pro Bridle Championship with a 649. Granade purchased the gelding, bred by Bradford Quarter Horses, from Ron and Ladona Emmons in 2008.**



**Olena Oak (Smart Chic Olena x Fritzs Oak E Dokie x Docs Oak), better known as “Ernie,” hauled Emmons to win the Open Bridle class with a 664-point performance. To date, this dynamic team has won more than \$250,000 together. When asked, Emmons stated that due to the stallion’s incredible mind and athletic ability, Olena Oak is the best horse he’s ever ridden.**

people say, ‘That’s my better half,’ she was my better 90 percent. When I lost her, I lost a lot of me. I had to kind of refine myself a little bit. I’m working on that.”

He recently found his way back

to the arena and said he knows it’s what Cindy would have wanted.

“She would not have liked that,” he said of how Cindy would’ve viewed his break from showing. “I could hear her telling me, ‘This

is your life. What are you doing sitting around feeling sorry for yourself?’ I could hear her telling me that I didn’t want to give up the one thing that we both loved so much. That gave me strength and got me back in the saddle. Now it’s up to me to keep carrying on with all of that.”

Earlier this year, Granade said he found the strength through Cindy to pick up the reins once again. With a phenomenal comeback, Granade rode Wright On Ned to win the Novice and Intermediate Non-Pro horse show classes at the NRCHA Derby and earn the Non-Pro Reserve Championship. It was the biggest win of his show career.

“I’ve been trying all this time to get one of those C.R. Morrison trophies. Boy, they’re tough to get. To go from zero to coming home with four was quite a deal. We’re still talking about it around here,” Granade said more than a week after his wins. “How does stuff like that happen?”

The bittersweet victories were tough ones to swallow for both the Emmons and Granade families without having Cindy there to witness it in person. But, as Granade explained, she was there.

“It was an emotional ending to the year to have it all come together. It was a happy and sad kind of thing because she wasn’t there to enjoy it all with us, to have her right next to me and give me a big hug,” Granade concluded. “But she was there spiritually. I know she was.”

## Olena Oak Wins Open Bridle

Following his win in the Derby, Emmons picked up the second largest payout of the event – the Open Bridle class, with longtime show partner Olena Oak, aka “Ernie.” The two worked to a 664-point composite and cashed in on \$28,500.

Emmons and the stallion have a well-known history in the show pen that now accompanies more than \$250,000 in earnings. They have earned numerous titles such as an AQHA Junior and Senior Cow Horse World Championship,

# NRCHA Derby Weathers the EHV-1 Storm

**The 2011 NRCHA Derby was one of many events that fell victim to the EHV-1 outbreak this summer. Originally scheduled for June in Paso Robles, Calif., the NRCHA board decided to postpone the event and rescheduled it for Oct. 27. Because the Paso Robles venue was booked during that time, the event was relocated to the Queeneshoe Park and Equestrian Centre in Queen Creek, Ariz., which also happens to be the new home for the NRCHA Stakes next March.**

Postponing and relocating one of the association's largest events of the year wreaked havoc on entry numbers, which took about a 35 percent hit compared to the number of entries originally entered in the June show, but as Cheryl Magoteaux of Pro Management explained, the board weighed its options and decided that rescheduling was the safest route for the industry.

"The board knew going in that it would have an impact on the numbers, but it was the over-

all consensus of the board to still give those 4- and 5-year-old horses a chance to compete at the Derby," Magoteaux said. "The number of days was modified because it wasn't as big a show as it had been in the past because so many people have commitments this time of year, such as the World Show. We were all just glad to have a venue for the Derby."

She added that the 2012 Derby will be back in full swing with its normal dates, and they expect entries to return to normal. —JH

numerous Open Bridle wins, Magnificent 7 Champion and Reserve Championships and a World Greatest Horseman Reserve Championship.

According to Emmons, the blaze-faced athlete is like fine wine – just getting better with age.

"He's showing in the reining better than he ever has, and he's still just as tough down the fence as any of them," he explained.

With close to \$800,000 in earnings himself, Emmons has ridden quite a few cow ponies down the fence. Still, he said Olena Oak ranks as the best horse he's ever ridden.

"He's got a brain that's just incredible," Emmons said of what has earned the stallion such honors. "That's one of the things that makes him such a good horse to show. He really doesn't try to cheat you. He pays attention to what you want to do and he tries his hardest every time. He does have a lot of physical ability also, but his mind is incredible."

Olena Oak is so laid-back, Emmons said, that to ride him around one would never believe the caliber of horse underneath.

"It's funny because when you get on him and ride him he feels like a dude horse. He grunts all the time. He grunts like an old man and he's done that since he was a baby," Emmons said with a laugh.

Olena Oak was bred to limited mares his first few years as a sire. Last year, owners Mel Smith and Nichole Scott opened the books to outside mares.



## LIMITED OPEN CHAMPION

(left) Teresa Webb's Noras Nitro (Nitro Dual Doc x Nora Lena x Doc O'Lena) carried E.J. Laubscher to the Limited Open win and \$4,300 after collecting 635.5 points. The mare was bred by Black Rock Ranch, Harrison, Idaho, and purchased by Webb in October last year from Laubscher, Colby, Kan.



## LEVEL 1 OPEN CHAMPION

(above) Matt Hoekenga piloted gelding IX Smart Starlight (Dox White Rabbit x Amys Pic x Fairleas Dandy Pic), owned by Elizabeth Younger, to 634.5 for the Level 1 Open Championship. The gelding was bred by Charles Amos.



## INTERMEDIATE NON-PRO AND NON-PRO CHAMPION

(left) Carol Roberts, Ojai, Calif., piloted Oaks Dual Rey (TR Dual Rey x Docs Pearly Oak x Doc's Oak) to a 649 to win the Non-Pro and Intermediate Non-Pro Derby for a total of \$15,380. The gelding was bred by Jamie Traiteur.