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Craig Thompson and Oh Cay Felix – Open Champion
Photo by Stacy Pigott

The National Cutting Horse Association crowns five champions at the 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity.

The 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity, wrapped up at Will Rogers Coliseum in Fort Worth, Texas on December 17, 2006.

(Fort Worth, TX) At the conclusion of the 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Finals, five new champions were crowned.

Limited Non-Pro:

Northbrook, Illinois rider wins the 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Limited Non-Pro championship in Fort Worth, Texas

(Fort Worth, TX)— On December 10, 2006, Monte Strusiner of Northbrook, Illinois riding EBR Lion Heart wins the title of Limited Non-Pro Champion. The winning horse is a stallion out of High Brow Cat, and was trained for Strusiner by Greg Wright of Grandview, TX, who oversees Strusiner's cutting horse operation.

Strusiner was third to work in the first bunch of two against a total of 20 Limited Non-Pro finalists, scoring 213 points. Deena Adams placed second with 212 points on MH San Tules Clay, a mare by San Tule Freckles.

A real estate developer with a horse facility in Grandview, Texas, Strusiner said of his winning run, "It's a team effort and I have a great team. I couldn't have done it without Greg." Strusiner has been a finalist in

19 NCHA Triple Crown Non-Pro and Amateur events since 1988, including 4 Futurities. His previous top finishes include a third in the 1992 Super Stakes Amateur Classic and a fourth in the 1989 Amateur Futurity.

"I love what I call the 'dance' of cutting," said Strusiner. "Your horse is your partner, but so is the cow, and you try to orchestrate a run." Strusiner also advanced to Non-Pro Semi-Finals on EBR Lion Heart.

Limited Open:

Houston, Texas horse wins the 2006 *NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Limited Open* championship in Fort Worth, Texas

(Fort Worth, TX)— On December 12, 2006, Brent Dorman of Fort Morgan, Colorado, riding CRR Smart Cat wins the title of Limited Open Champion. The winning horse is a stallion out of Cats Rhett, and is owned by Richard Mason of Houston, Texas.

Brent Dorman had not earned money in NCHA competition until this win, giving him \$12,169 money-earning credit. Dorman rode CRR Smart Little Cat, owned by Richard Mason of Houston, to win the Limited Open championship with 216 points. He also qualified the horse in the Open Semi-Finals, where he scored a 213.5, just missing making the finals.

"This is the second time I've shown here," said Dorman, age 32, who has been working for trainer Lloyd Cox since June. "The first time was a couple of years ago. I put my hand down for about 10 seconds and that was it."

Dorman broke CRR Smart Little Cat as a two year-old, and Richard Mason purchased the horse this past spring. Although he broke colts, horses were not his real interest until he discovered cutting four years ago. Regarding his work with Lloyd Cox and CRR Smart Little Cat, Dorman said "This horse fits Lloyd's style – creeping around and low-working. The best move I made was when I went to work for Lloyd. He's helped me a lot. I tried to do it on my own, but I didn't have enough knowledge," he admitted. "That's why I went to work for some people." Dorman also worked for Roy Carter and Lindy Burch.

Amateur:

Lincoln, Illinois rider wins the 2006 *NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Amateur* championship in Fort Worth, Texas.

(Fort Worth, TX)— On December 15, 2006, Patrick Collins of Lincoln, Illinois, riding Oh Cay Felix wins the title of Amateur Champion. The winning horse is a gelding out of High Brow Cat.

Patrick Collins and Oh Cay Felix brought down the house at the NCHA Amateur finals with a score of 222 to win the title. "He is a gift – an awesome horse," said Collins of his homegrown son of High Brow Cat. "Craig (Thompson) has done a fabulous job training him and getting him ready. I happened to be here at the right time, at the right place."

Collins, 51, is a feedlot owner from Lincoln, Illinois. Before his Finals performance, he said his cutting highlight had been when trainer Craig Thompson scored 219 points on Oh Cay Felix in the second go-round of Open competition, qualifying the horse for the Semi-Finals.

“I’d seen him through the year and knew that he was nice,” said Collins. “But Craig kind of keeps the package always wrapped and smooth and silky. The real test is when you do down there and put your hand down.”

Collins has to use his right hand when he puts his hand down. His left arm was severed at the elbow in a farm accident 25 years ago. Although the arm was reattached surgically, he keeps it tucked up to his chest when he rides as it is useless during competition. His right hand holds his reins, and he also uses it to stabilize himself by pushing against a special bar built on the front of his saddle.

Non-Pro:

Poolville, Texas rider wins the 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Non-Pro championship in Fort Worth, Texas.

(Fort Worth, TX)— On December 15, 2006, Matt Miller of Poolville, Texas, riding Travs Scooter, a mare out of Smart Lil Scoot, wins the title of Non-Pro Champion.

Matt Miller, 22, and Travs Scooter made an impression last night while winning the Non-Pro championship with a score of 220.5 points. Miller trained the mare himself. Travs Scooter is a half-sister to Travs Smart kit, who Miller rode to win the 2005 Breeders Invitational Non-Pro.

“I’ve had high expectations for her,” said Miller of Travs Scooter. “She is always intense, but easy to ride. And she’s really smart about a cow. If she gets in a bad spot, she’s quick to fix it.”

Miller worked two testy cows, and then clinched his win with a third. “The first and second cows were really good,” he said. “But the third was the best. We stayed right there (in the middle) for 15 seconds and that mare never took a wrong step. She just melted down.”

Last fall, Miller had to lay Travs Scooter up for two and a half months after she bruised her foot. But she came back as if she had never missed a day of training. This past spring, Miller won the NCHA Super Stakes Limited Non-Pro on Hokies Cat. He has a lifetime earnings of \$310,000.

Open:

Lincoln, Illinois horse wins the 2006 NCI Building Systems/NCHA World Championship Futurity Open championship in Fort Worth, Texas.

(Fort Worth, TX)— On December 17, 2006, Oh Cay Felix, ridden by Craig Thompson of Buffalo, Texas, wins the title of Open Champion.

It took guts and grit to win the 2006 NCHA Futurity in a spectacular eleventh-hour finish, and Oh Cay Felix and Craig Thompson provided just that, scoring 227 points, the second-highest score in the history of the NCHA Futurity. The win earned Oh Cay Felix an unprecedented second Futurity championship as he claimed the NCHA Amateur win earlier in the event with a score of 222 points under owner Patrick Collins of Lincoln, Illinois. The Open championship also earned Oh Cay Felix the richest winner’s purse in NCHA Triple Crown history - \$250,000, which makes the gelded son of High Brow Cat the richest three year-old in the history of the sport, with earnings of \$262,164, including his Amateur winner’s take.

“He’s one of the grittiest horses,” said Thompson. “He just loves to work. You cut him clean and he takes care of the rest.” Drawing dead last in the 26-horse finals didn’t concern Thompson. “To be honest, I was

happy to have the last spot because I knew exactly what cows I wanted to cut and what my job was,” said Thompson.

“J.B. McLamb, Paul and Winston Hansma, and Shannon Hall were all great help. I had a lot of confidence in them. When we went down there, they gave me their input on the cows. There had been so many great runs and so many great rider ahead of me, they kind of narrowed the list down and we went with what was left.”

Thompson cut three cows and clinched the win on the third with 28 seconds of working time. “J.B. spotted my last cow,” he said. “I wasn’t sure about it, but I didn’t want to waste any time. I just wanted to go down there and show my horse to his best.”

Oh Cay Felix was bred by Collins out of Oh Cay Shorty, the lifetime earner of \$61,000. Collins purchased the Shorty Lena daughter as an eight year-old and rode her at weekend events earning more than \$40,000. This past year, Collins rode Oh Cay Felix’s three-quarter sister, Southbound Shorty (also trained by Thompson) to qualify for the NCHA Amateur Futurity Semi-Finals and earn \$15,293 through December 2006. Of Oh Cay Felix and Southbound Shorty, Collins said, “They’re both cow smart and gritty. But he moves just a little bit more level and is a little easier to ride. He’s a gift, an awesome horse. I just happened to be here at the right time.”

Collins noted, “Craig has done a fabulous job training him and getting him ready. I’d seen him through the year and knew he was nice. But Craig kind of keeps the package always wrapped and smooth and silky. When I came down here (at the beginning of the Futurity), I saw him ask the horse for a little bit, and I saw what he had.”

Patrick Collins, 51, is a feedlot owner and was introduced to cutting when he began supplying cattle for weekend cuttings in Illinois. He and his four sons, Max, Quinn, Patrick, and Lach, competed in weekend cuttings.

Craig Thompson, 35, operates his own training facility in Buffalo, Texas, where he lives with wife, Sasha, and sons Chase and Catch. Prior to his \$250,000 Futurity win, Thompson had NCHA lifetime earnings of \$619,000. He got his start training cutting horses with Matt Gaines.

NCI Building Systems is the largest integrated manufacturer and marketer of metal building components, engineered metal building systems and metal coil coating in North America. Based in Houston, Texas, NCI Building Systems is publicly traded on the NYSE as NCS, is comprised of 18 companies with 44 manufacturing facilities located throughout the United States, in Canada and Mexico. NCI is able to provide a variety of custom building needs; from large riding arenas to small storage buildings, from metal roof panels for your home to a wall system for your business. For more information about NCI Building System please visit www.cuttinghorsebuildings.com.

The National Cutting Horse Association is made up of over 17,000 members across the United States with a wide range of backgrounds. The sport of cutting has roots in Western ranching traditions, where good horses were a necessity for everyday ranch work and cattle handling. From cowgirls to CEOs, from firefighters to professional football players, the common ground is often in the cutting arena. Each year more than 2,200 NCHA-approved events are held throughout the country with more than \$42 million in prize money awarded. To learn more about the National Cutting Horse Association and the sport of cutting, call 817-244-6188 or visit www.nhacutting.com.