

WESTERN HORSEMAN

Personality Profile

JoLinn Hoover

By Fran Devereux Smith

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At the fourth annual Oregon Mountain Trail Championships, held last fall at the Oregon horse Center in Eugene, (see “Not Your Average Trail Competition” in this issue), JoLinn Hoover of MJ Rising H Ranch, Richland, Oregon, and her mount Another Legacy, made commendable efforts in adult- and open-division competition , and in the bareback trail-class jackpot . The pair even tallied the event’s highest score. They seemed destined for a big win the last day- until JoLinn’s mount encountered the “fog” lurking in a long deep ditch obstacle.

“I’d be remiss if I didn’t say I was very disappointed,” she says. “It was well worth the trip for our business, even through the last few tears I allowed myself before putting life back in proper perspective.”

However, during the first ever Mountain Trail Spring Challenge, held in Eugene this past April, Another Legacy and JoLinn redeemed themselves and made a comeback. They won the adult championship, with husband Mitch winning the open and adult titles in the timed-judged division.

You mentioned your business. What do you and Mitch do?

I grew up showing cutters, reiners, and cow horses, then married a roper and rodeo person. We managed Pine Valley Ranch, one of the largest in eastern Oregon, for 25 years before buying our own place. Now we have phased in to training horses and coaching people for ranch-versatility and trail competition. We also run just enough cattle to work they horses and we pasture cattle for several area ranchers.

So what's the appeal of the mountain-trail events?

A trail course is part of ranch versatility competition. Our clients might do well working cattle or ace the reining in versatility, but some can't make it through a trail course at all. That's why we started coming to the Eugene events.

Plus, these mountain-trail events are something anybody can do because they can set up all kinds of of obstacles at home for practice. Trail and recreational riders have become a big part of these events. Classes are made available for every level of horse and rider, so there's something for everyone.

That must have been tough on you, as a coach, to lose the championship last fall.

It was, but I told myself the same thing I tell my students: "You have three seconds to feel sorry for yourself. Now get back in there and rope another steer or ride through another obstacle. Life goes on."

How has the trail competition changed your ranch horse training?

Actually, in the trail events, Mitch and I perform the maneuvers with the horses that we normally use in our ranch work, but we're more precise with them and pay more attention to the details. That makes the horses better at their ranch jobs at home, so it's a win-win thing. Mitch says the mountain-trail-competition skills has helped his horsemanship more than he could have possibly predicted.

What surprises you most at competitive mountain-trail events?

We are fairly amazed at the lack of preparation many riders display prior to competition. How can someone better prepare for such events? Get basic training for you and your horse. If the horse is one you already own ask someone knowledgeable to help you determine if the horse is safe for this type of work; some of the obstacles can be tough, especially when a horse isn't precise in how he handles. Learn showmanship skills, too. Often what separates the top six riders in each division is a little tiny showmanship thing that you won't know about unless you have some good help.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years from now?

I'll still be involved in ranch versatility and trail, and Mitch and I will still be instructors at rodeo camps, and putting on our ranch-horse and cow-dog clinics geared towards rodea-style work. I see that growing in popularity, and myself teaching more. Mitch and have reached the stage where we want to give back to the industry, and our clinics are a hoot. We meet more great people and families, who become friends and come back to visit, and that's what life is about.

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