

AW4D SOUTHWEST CLASSIC

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Off the Track to Back on Track

For Salmon, Idaho, trainer Sadie Cook, the Southwest Classic proved that the goofy gelding she bought almost three years ago off the track was more horse than she thought. The New Answer (“Grasshopper”) was a dud on the track but Cook saw potential in him.

“He was nicknamed Grasshopper, and when I bought him I told the guy that I hoped that wasn’t because of the way he moved. Come to find out, that’s exactly what it was,” Cook laughed. “That colt, I don’t think he took more than two steps without kicking up with his hind feet. He wasn’t mean – he’d never ever buck with you – he was, and is, just a big goofy off. I could see why he didn’t win any money



Sadie Cook and The New Answer.

on the track, he was running practically with two feet.”

Nevertheless, Cook began training Grasshopper for barrels, moving him along slowly. By the time the Southwest Classic rolled around, he’d had five runs put on him, all done two weeks before the Classic. Cook wasn’t sure how he would do and planned to take it easy and place in the 4D or 5D.

“The first run I just couldn’t believe it. He just worked real well,” Cook said. “The second

AT-A-GLANCE

AW4D Southwest Classic

When: February 8-10, 2008

Where: Empty Acres Equine Resort, Buckeye, Ariz.

Entries: 805

Total Purse: \$43,950

Results: Open average: 1D) Tami Semas, Our Superior Choice; 2D) Sadie Cook, The New Answer; 3D) Gigi Goddard, Shamel Countess; 4D) Lisa Hansen, Pilot Error; 5D) Patricia McCaw, Pilgrim San. **Youth average:** 1D) Megan Simmons, Ima; 2D) Gabby Santos, Over Bar Pine; 3D) Nicole Riggle, My Windy Dee; 4D) Nicole Riggle, Audi B Naughty. **Senior Average:** 1D) Lucy Schnabele, Agony’s Otoo Wonder; 2D) Shirley Martin, Hitch Hike Ta Fame; 3D) Krikett Smith, Spin a Rainbow; 4D) Terry Hackett, Nuggett.

run he didn’t have quite as good a run but still worked. The third run – that was the very first weekend that I ever put three runs back to back on him – so the third run I thought, ‘boy, I just want him to go in and be all right with everything still.’ And then he stepped up and ran well again.”

Cook and Grasshopper ran in the bottom of the 1D the whole weekend, just barely out of the 2D and out of the money all together.

After their run on Sunday, Cook decided to head home. On the way, one of her youth students, Gigi Goddard, called her and asked if she wanted her buckle.

“I felt so bad that I’d left because the American West, they’re great guys, and I wanted to support them – I just didn’t figure I’d won anything,” she laughed. “It was really neat for that colt to do as well as he did, for as much as he’d been run. And those were some tough horses he was running against. Shoot, I would have sold that colt for next to nothing last year but it’s going to take quite a bit to get him from me now.”

Cook attributes some of her success to her boyfriend, Mike Ricks.

“He’s the one that made me buy this colt because I probably wouldn’t have bought him otherwise,” she said. “He’s very supportive (of what I do), and I couldn’t do it without him.”

Winter Vacation Pays Off

Cook’s protégé, Gigi Goddard, also proved she has what it takes. The high school sophomore from Spring Creek, Nev., who was down for the winter with her grandparents, ran her 17-year-old mare, Shamel Countess (“Shamel”), in the Open and the Youth division.



Gigi Goddard and Shamel Countess.

Though she’s only been barrel racing for three years, Goddard did well over the weekend.

On Friday she placed out of the money in the Open but came in third in the Youth 2D. Saturday, her times improved, and she moved up to fourth in the Open 2D and second in the Youth 1D on her other horse, Pawnee Dee and first in the Youth 3D on Shamel. On Sunday, once again she placed fourth in the Open 2D and third in the Youth 1D on Pawnee Dee.

By the time the weekend was over, she had won the 3D Open average and placed second in the Youth 2D average on Shamel and placed third in the Youth 1D aboard Pawnee Dee.

“It was a pretty tough race,” Goddard said. “I hadn’t run there before and my goal was really to just keep all the barrels up.”

Cook, who Goddard has been riding with a little more than two years, had driven down to Arizona about the same time and had been working with the teen and her horses.

“If I do something wrong she helps me correct it, and if there’s something going wrong with my horse she’ll figure it out and fix it,” Goddard said. “She’s always there to give me advice and to pick me up if I’m in a bad mood or if my run goes bad. She’s a really big support.”

All in all, for snowbirds and locals alike, the Southwest Classic turned out to be a memorable weekend. After all, what’s not to like about great weather, friendly competition and the chance to turn and burn under the Arizona sun?

Heather Loveridge is a freelance writer from Georgia. To comment on this article please email bhneditorial@cowboypublishing.com.