

Extreme Cowboy competition has inaugural World Championships

Robin Bond shines as California's top finisher

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TOPEKA, Kan. — Before last February's Equine Affaire in Pomona, trainer Robin Bond of Rancho Dos Palmas ranch in Vista heeded encouragement of her clients: enter the Extreme Cowboy event.

She did, and nine months after being bitten by the Extreme Cowboy bug, she found herself Nov. 15 just a point shy of being World Champion in the Professional Division of the first Extreme Cowboy Race World Championships.

"I thought I was going to win it, but I didn't count my chickens," said Bond, whose 389.25 final total on Jose's Perfection trailed Lee Hart of Kansas (390.25) and Kelly LeBlanc of Illinois (389.5). "I was going up against the group of guys who I'd never seen ride before."

She also was the only finalist with two horses in the Top 10. In addition to third place on "Chapo", a 12-year-old Quarter Horse gelding owned by Ricardo Cruz, Bond also finished in 10th on Zan's Bar Two, a 9-year-old Quarter gelding owned by Ann Laddon, owner of Rancho Dos Palmas.

In all, 26 professionals competed in their division—one of five divisions of riders that also featured Young Guns (ages 7 years to 11), Youth (12-17), Non-Professional, and Ride Smart (over 55).

Two of Bond's clients earned national recognition with Top 10 finishes in their respective divisions: Lisa Rehberger of Point Loma in the Non-Professional and her 16-year-old daughter, Carly Bowerman in the Youth. Mom and daughter both rode Trinket.

"You have to have a horse that lopes well, that responds to cues properly, that does trail obstacles," said Bond, who broke into riding as a girl with hunters and jumpers, then moved to eventing before joining the Navy. Upon ending her service in 1992, she found work with horses under Sandy Arledge at Far West Farms in Del Mar, where she stayed for 10 years.

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Robin Bond and Jose's Perfection, a 12-year-old Quarter Horse gelding owned by Ricky Cruz, take third place in the first Extreme Cowboy Association World Championships.

"I owe a lot to Sandy for this particular event because I watched her over trail obstacles for 10 years," said Bond, the western trainer at Rancho Dos Palmas about 3-and-a-half years. "She helped me understand how to get a horse comfortable over trail obstacles. You want to take your horse in there, and you want to do it slow and you want to do it correct, and you want them to be comfortable. Then, as they get more comfortable, then they put the speed on almost by themselves."

At Rancho Dos Palmas, Bond does reining, some reined cow horse, and lately ranch roping. Her rapid rise in the fledging sport of the Extreme Cowboy Race combined with the surging popularity of the sport has provided focus for her future.



"At the Equine Affaire where I did my first Extreme Cowboy race, I handed out a lot of business cards—and every card that I handed out, somebody called on," she said. "That was really rare, and that's what determined my path for

the next several years. There there's a call for this, and I'm good at teaching it. That's my main focus, getting people started in the Novice and the Non-pro level of the Extreme Cowboy race."

The Extreme Cowboy Race events are designed to challenge both the rider and horse to overcome a series of obstacles. The number of obstacles crossed, overall horsemanship and speed with control are the basis for scoring participants.

It is mandatory for all the participants to be members of the Extreme Cowboy Association. The registration process is still open for the riders of all ages and for all the breeds of horses & mules. Western-style clothing and tack is a must for all the participants.

Another Californian, Bill Cameron, rode I'll Cowboy Up to take fourth place in the Extreme Cowboy Association World Championships with a 377 total score.