

# Joplin woman preps for world championship in extreme cowboy racing



Annie Chance makes a jump on her horse Hot Rod Whiz at her training ranch in Joplin on Wednesday.  
Globe | Roger Nomer

Annie Chance is most at home on her south Joplin ranch, where she works day in and day out with her beloved horses.

And you might not know it by looking at her, but with multiple championships — including at least two national and one global championship — under her belt, she is already one of the best extreme cowboy racers in the world.

**“I rode horses all my life,” said Chance, 28, “and extreme cowboy racing puts together a lot of the elements I’ve done in other disciplines. I think it creates well-rounded ranch horses.”**

Extreme cowboy racing is a sport that tests higher levels of horsemanship through real-life challenges and obstacles, according to the Extreme Cowboy Association. Skills tested in competitions include jumping, roping or shooting a gun, as well as speed and technique used by the rider.

**“EXCA was created on the ideas and values based in the American cowboy tradition and the ranch lifestyle,” writes Craig Cameron, the EXCA founder, on his website. “We believe that within the EXCA, Western (American) beliefs and values are preserved and old cowboy traditions are still alive and well. Honesty, integrity, strong work ethic and the state of mind to never quit are a few beliefs that EXCA was built around. The EXCA is the defender of old cowboy traditions rich with American pride.”**

Chance has competed in the sport for about a decade now, and she only seems to be **getting better. She’s** fresh off a win at the Calgary Stampede, an elite 10-person **invitational that she says is her sport’s equivalent of the Super Bowl. The top 10** competitors try for monetary prizes over three rounds, and more than 2 million people are drawn to Calgary to watch the event, she said.

**“It is probably our most coveted title,” she said.**

Chance was named the 2017 Cowboy Up Challenge champion with her horse, 4-year-old Smarty Pants Marty, owned by Butch and Cindy Mitchell, of Fairland, Oklahoma. He was the youngest horse to ever win that contest, she said.

**“It’s not a very dignified name,” she joked of Smarty Pants Marty, “but he is a wonderful horse. He’s the best colt I’ve ever started. I feel very blessed to get to show him. He’s small but mighty.”**

Chance is now geared up for the EXCA world championship, which will begin Wednesday in Hamilton, Texas. She has spent the past couple of weeks with Smarty Pants Marty, practicing individual skills and refining her ability to handle the pressure of the competition.

**“Everyone at the top has the ability to win, but the person who can handle the pressure is usually the winner,” she said.**

But at the end of the day, winning is secondary to what Chance believes is her mission in life.

**“I love winning, don’t get me wrong,” she said. “But I feel really blessed to live in such an amazing place and have an opportunity to make a difference in people’s lives.”**

### **International competitors**

For the past few weeks, Chance has also been hosting eight international horsemen and women, four from Australia and four from Belgium, who will travel with her to compete in **the world championship in Texas. They’ve been staying at Rowdy’s Rustic Moose Lodge** in Columbus, Kansas, and because it was too expensive for them to bring their own horses to the United States, they’ll be competing on animals borrowed from local owners.



Annie Chance saddles her horse Hot Rod Whiz before training on Wednesday.  
Globe | Roger Nomer

Shane Woodall started the Down Under Extreme Cowboys club with his wife two and a half years ago after wanting something a little different to do with their horses, which they bred and rode in rodeos. The club, of which he is the president, now has approximately 130 members and has affiliates in several Australian states, including Queensland and Tasmania.

This trip marks his first time to compete in the United States, **and he can't wait to get into the arena with his competition horse, an animal he'll borrow from Chance.**

**"I just want to get there and do it," he said. "It's probably one of the most exciting things, apart from my boys being born."**

Andre Veris, president of the Belgian Extreme Cowboy Association, said he was drawn to extreme cowboy racing after watching competitions on the Internet. This is his first time to compete in the Texas event, and he is very excited.

**"I'm looking forward to meeting a lot of people who are interested in this sport and making contact to make the sport grow in Belgium," he said.**

Over the past two weeks, Veris has worked hard to get to know his loaner horse in order to develop a relationship with him and gain confidence in him. Even so, his horse's performance at the competition won't be the most important thing.

**"The first thing I'm looking for here is to have fun," he said. "Thank you to Annie for inviting us and letting us, in fact, realize our dream, which is participation in the world championships."**