

[**Kinder Cup** Barrel Racing Championship]

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Born For This

► Kinder Cup Barrel Racing Championship showcases top-tier talent.

Article by Jessica Lash
Photos by 555 Photography



Ashley Schafer and Born On Derby Day placed second in both rounds of the futurity to clinch the Kinder Cup Futurity Championship with an average of 29.397. Combined weekend earnings for the Comanche, Texas, trainer totaled \$37,141.

THE 15TH ANNUAL KINDER CUP BARREL RACING CHAMPIONSHIP BOASTED RECORD ATTENDANCE at this year's event, with close to 2,200 competitors passing through the gates. The event, which ran from February 9–12 at Coushatta Casino Resort Event Pavilion in Kinder, Louisiana, paid out more than \$650,000 and awarded a bounty of prizes to competitors.

Producer Stacey Warner credits much of this year's growth to a budding partnership with the Breeders Challenge incentive.

"Breeders Challenge brought a lot to the plate," Warner said. "It was an awesome opportunity for us to host a qualifier, and it showed in our numbers."

Warner and co-producer André Dohrn, along with their husbands Jim Warner and Ryan Dohrn, strive to deliver an event that is produced with the competitor in mind. Stacey and André wear hats as both barrel racing contestants and show producers, and they call on this unique perspective to help create an exceptional barrel racing experience.

In addition to substantial payouts and a multitude of great prizes—including a BM Signature Series saddle, custom saddle stands, Molly's Custom Silver buckles, Horse Hair Analysis gear bags and Equinety product from Kinder Cup's title sponsor—the event offered the bonus of having a casino right next door. That, coupled with a laidback atmosphere, made for a memorable experience.

"We're super proud of the event, and it'll be a return event," Stacey assured. "Breeders Challenge is coming back, and I really don't see anything that will change, other than maybe adding a day."

Ashley Schafer and Born On Derby Day Win Futurity Championship

Born On Derby Day's success was no surprise to owner-trainer Ashley Schafer. She knew before the red roan filly ever hit the ground that the ability to excel was going to be there. Schafer says the

5-year-old mare's sire and dam are two of the best horses she has ever trained and jockeyed—Wrangler National Finals Rodeo-qualifying stallion Freckles Ta Fame and multiple futurity champion mare KR Last Fling.

Still, the road to success has required planning and patience.

"I purposely held her [to run as a 5-year-old], not because she was behind training-wise. I actually had her loping the barrels as a 2-year-old, but I could tell she was mentally pretty fragile," Schafer explained. "She's a little hot and just a little insecure, so I wanted to make sure I had plenty of time to slow things down as needed and be able to really make her super solid."

The decision to bring the mare along slowly has paid dividends for Schafer.

In the first round of the futurity, Schafer and "Derby" stopped the clock at 14.697 to win second place and \$3,389. The duo held strong in the second round with a 14.700 for second again and an additional \$3,389 in earnings. They topped the average with a 29.397 to win the Kinder Cup Futurity Championship and \$5,422. Including slot race, Open, Breeders Challenge and side-pot payouts, Schafer left Louisiana as the weekend's highest-money earner with \$37,141.

"The first round, she came in there and made a spectacular run, and I was so excited and happy with her," Schafer said.

After the first go, Schafer knew maintaining softness and relaxation in the second go was going to be critical.

"The last couple of futurities I've

gone to with her, she's been really good the first round and still good the second round, but not as good. I made sure to channel everything and make sure she felt really relaxed and soft," Schafer said. "I think what I did on the other [runs] was I tried to be fast, and on her—this is how her mother was and how her sister was, too—you can't really think about trying to be fast. My whole focus coming into this particular futurity was just to get myself and her prepared better for the second round."

Instead of worrying about speed, Schafer simply focused on making a smooth pass.

"I made sure to slow everything down in my mind and not think about the win, but just think about being smooth again, because the thing is, with a horse that has the ability she has and the speed she has, if you can just go in there and be smooth, the time will take care of itself," she said.

Schafer said the tremendous heart that Derby puts into every run is a key piece of the mare's success in the barrel pen.

"That's something you really can't train into one," she said. "Now, you can take it out of one, but you can't make one have that kind of try—it's something that the special ones have, and she definitely has it. So does her mother, her sister and her father. She was bred to have the amount of try and heart that she has."

Schafer thanked her sponsors Classic Equine, Martin Saddlery, Schoneberg Performance Bits, Rock and Roll Denim, Summit Joint Performance,

Born On Derby Day

2017 red roan mare, owned by Ashley and Seth Schafer, bred by Joe and Carla Spitz

BORN ON DERBY DAY {	FRECKLES TA FAME {	DASH TA FAME {	FIRST DOWN DASH SUDDEN FAME
		FRENCHMANS FRECKLES {	FRENCHMANS GUY POSITIVELY A COYOTE
	KR LAST FLING {	A STREAK OF FLING {	STREAKIN SIX MOON FLING
		SANCEE BUG {	SHAWNE BUG FANCY SANCEE

[Kinder Cup Barrel Racing Championship]

Kahm CBD, Silver Lining Herbs, Forco Feed Supplement, MVP and NeutraBacPH.

Kortney Kizer and Coronaslucky Twonite Top Futurity Slot Race

Kortney Kizer and Coronaslucky Twonite turned in an impressive 14.660 to win the Kinder Cup Futurity Slot Race for \$17,000. Futurity rounds and Breeders Challenge checks brought the duo's total earnings for the weekend to \$29,863.

You wouldn't have known by watching Kizer's run, but she and "Jill" had only made a handful of competition runs prior to the slot race. As a 4-year-old, the mare banged her leg, forcing Kizer to hold off entering her for another year. She made her debut runs in November 2021 at the Barrel Futurities of America World Championships, and then strained a suspensory ligament. Following a six-week respite, Kizer and Jill only had time for one other event before the Kinder Cup. The mare had every reason to show up to the race unprepared, but she didn't seem to know it.

"She is just such a special mare," Kizer said. "She makes it so much fun. I'm very blessed to have her."

Kizer bought Jill at the Jud Little Sale as a 3-year-old with about 30 rides.

"My friends and I had originally saved up some money, and we were looking at one of the junior studs at the Jud Little Sale, and he just went way out of our budget," Kizer said. "So toward the end of the sale, they're like, 'You should buy a horse out of the sale. These are the last bloodlines of Jud's breeding.'"

Kizer made a leap of faith and bought the mare sight unseen. Soon after, she went to work refining her fundamentals and then started her on the barrel pattern. As it turned out, Jill was a natural.

"She's very intense. She's goal-oriented and she just wants to run barrels, so that makes it easy for me," Kizer said.

Typical of a JL Dash Ta Heaven, all



Kortney Kizer of Pep, New Mexico, piloted Coronaslucky Twonite to a 14.660 to win the Kinder Cup Futurity Slot Race for \$17,000. The pair finished the weekend with total earnings of \$29,863.

Coronaslucky Twonite

2017 sorrel mare, owned by Kortney Kizer, bred by Jud Little

			{ FIRST DOWN DASH SUDDEN FAME
	JL DASH TA HEAVEN {	DASH TA FAME	
		DYNAS PLAIN SPECIAL	{ SPECIAL FEELINS DYNA SNOW
CORONASLUCKY TWONITE {			
		CORONA FOUR FIESTA {	{ HOLLAND EASE CORONA CHICK
		CORONA CARTEL	
		FIREWATER FIESTA	{ FIRE WATER FLIT MIGHTY MINDY

of that intensity is not without its complexities. The mare has strong opinions that she's not afraid to express.

"When I get on, I'm just prepared that if I go to start doing stuff, she's probably going to buck. We walk a while, then we trot a while, and then I can usually feel when she's going to do it and I can talk her out of it now. She's very sensitive, so when I get on her, I don't go to sticking my feet in her because I might eat dirt," Kizer said with a laugh.

Kizer, who trains full time out of her Pep, New Mexico, facility, said she and Jill have figured out the give-and-take relationship that makes them a success-

ful team. Keeping the mare relaxed is an important part of her program, and that is where Kizer focused her attention before Friday's winning run. The strategy paid off, and she is eager to see what she and Jill will accomplish next.

"I'm just so excited to see what the future holds and to see her come into her own," Kizer concluded. "I don't think she's peaked yet."

Brittany Pozzi Tonozzi and Rock On Guys Rock the Derby

Rock On Guys gifted Brittany Pozzi Tonozzi the birthday present of a lifetime when he clocked a 14.638 to win the Kinder Cup Derby, Breeders

Challenge Derby and Friday's Open. The 5-year-old gelding traded in his goofy personality for an all-business attitude when he ran down the alleyway Friday night to claim the Derby championship.

All totaled, Tonozzi and "Lefty" took home \$16,894 and a plethora of prizes. Although Tonozzi is no stranger to success in the barrel pen, winning the event on a horse she bred, raised and trained certainly sweetened the victory.

"It's really exciting, because [my stallion] A Guy With Proof is still young in his career as a stallion and Lefty is only his second [foal] crop to perform," Tonozzi said. "To have a winner come out that quickly and do so well...we're just really pleased, and we're excited about the futures of A Guy With Proof and Lefty."

Lefty's innate confidence is something that has set him apart from the beginning.



Brittany Pozzi Tonozzi of Lampasas, Texas, and Rock On Guys clocked a 14.638 to win the Derby, Friday's Open 1D and \$16,894 in total earnings for the event.

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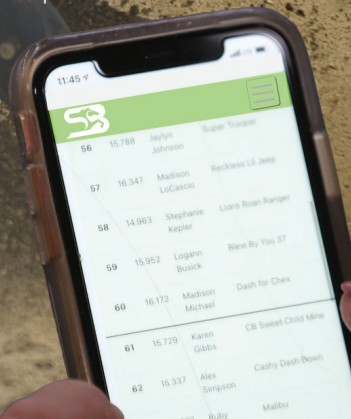
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[Kinder Cup Barrel Racing Championship]



Top to bottom, left to right: Dustin Angelle of Robert, Louisiana, rode 2013 gelding VF Born Famous (Born Ta Be Famous x Sleek Glass x Image of Greatness) to the fastest time of the weekend with a 14.541 to win Saturday's Open for \$2,091.

Denise Rucker of Round Rock, Texas, and 2018 gelding Energi (Traffic Guy x Golly Gigi x Gol) claimed the Amateur Futurity Championship and \$936 with an aggregate of 30.646.

Mickayla Brown and Stoli Is Back (Stoli x RC Back In Black x Ninety Nine Goldmine) earned Friday's Open 2D win with a time of 15.144, worth \$1,504.

Pete Oen and Hip Swingin Fame (Dash Ta Fame x Hip Swingin Gypsy x Firewaterontherocks) won Saturday's Open 2D with a time of 15.046 for \$1,486.

Bobbi Randle and FC A Classic Latte (A Classic Current x Gonna Make A Million x Notenough Firewater) topped the Amateur Futurity first go with a 15.116, worth \$1,131.

Summer Pauly and Cathys Kandy (The Kandyman x Frenchmans Perlette x Frenchmans Guy) topped the Amateur Futurity second go with a 15.073, worth \$1,131.

Rock On Guys

2017 sorrel gelding, owned and bred by Garrett and Brittany Tonozzi

ROCK ON GUYS {	A GUY WITH PROOF	{ FRENCHMANS GUY	{ SUN FROST
		{ AMERICAN PROOF	{ FRENCHMAN'S LADY
VITAL ROCK			{ EXTRA PROOF
		{ FIREWATERONTEROCKS	{ CAUSE OF LIBERTY
		{ MANDASFINALSIGNATURE	{ FIRE WATER FLIT
			{ ROCK N ROLL RONA
			{ VITAL SIGN
			{ AMANDA MICHELLE

"I've never thought, 'Oh, Lefty, we're going to go in there and we're going to cruise to the first so I make sure you see it, you turn it.' That's never been him. I've trained a lot of horses, and I don't remember very many of them that had the confidence going to the first barrel that he has," Tonozzi said.

Lefty showed Tonozzi the depth of that confidence from his very first competition run, when a horse that she was

slated to run in the 2020 BFA World Championships SuperStakes slot race chipped her knee and had to be withdrawn.

"I had already paid for the slot and I'm like, 'Well, I guess it's you, Lefty,'" Tonozzi said with a laugh.

The gelding answered the call by winning fifth place. That's when the 15-time NFR qualifier had an inkling of just how special Lefty might be.

That same cool confidence is exactly what Tonozzi relied on to make Friday's winning run. With such a tough field of derby competitors, she knew there was only one option—she and Lefty had to lay everything on the line.

"I just let him rip to the first barrel," Tonozzi said. "He came off the third barrel a little, so I was really paying attention to getting him over to the gate and I didn't see the timer. When [the announcer] said my time, I was floored. There were so many emotions. I was just so happy. The baby that we raised and trained—by our stud, of all things."

After Tonozzi took the lead, she had to wait out seven more runs to see if Lefty's time would hold.

"I was like, 'Oh, I've just got to sweat out seven more,'" she said with a laugh. "I never dreamed that he would stay winning the Open and everything."

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