

[Lucky Dog Productions and Breeders Challenge]

EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Lucky in Memphis

› Barrel racers from across the country flocked to Tennessee for a shot at cash, prizes and a Breeders Challenge Finale qualification.

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Photos by Fessler Photography



Fessler Photo

Brian Wheeler of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and SBW Heavenly Peach turned in a 14.671 in the first go and a 14.356 in the second go to win the Lucky Dog and Breeders Challenge Futurity average championships with an aggregate time of 29.027. All totaled, the pair earned \$12,937.

COMPETITORS FROM 27 STATES GATHERED AT THE AGRICENTER SHOWPLACE ARENA in Memphis, Tennessee, from May 5–8 to make a run at more than \$345,000 in total cash payout. The event was Lucky Dog Productions' third year in Memphis and its second year partnering with the Breeders Challenge. Producer Christy Lewis says she is grateful for the opportunity to work with the Breeders Challenge and appreciates the caliber of horses the partnership draws.

"We are very thankful for the opportunity to work with the Breeders Challenge and to have those top futurity riders come, especially because they have the Ruby Buckle the weekend before, Better Barrel Races World Finals the weekend before that, and then the Old Fort Days Futurity coming up after. We are thankful they still think ours is a good one to come to among all the others going on," Lewis said.

Lewis says while this year's event certainly boasted a star-studded lineup, there were a few superstars who didn't take center stage—members of her unstoppable event staff.

"Most people probably had no idea, but we had so many challenges and things to overcome at this show," Lewis shared. "If it wasn't for my staff staying up until 3 a.m. one day and then getting up early to go right back at it, we would have been in a bind. It would have been a mess, but they stuck through and did whatever it took to get the job done."

Brian Wheeler and SBW Heavenly Peach Find Futurity Success

Make no mistake, Brian Wheeler and SBW Heavenly Peach showed up to win in Memphis. The 4-year-old mare clocked a solid 14.671 to place fifth in the first go-round but came back with a vengeance in the second go, turning in a 14.356 to claim both the go-round and average wins.

"In the first go, she didn't run really hard, as far as how I've felt her run

before,” Brian said. “Friday, they had open arena and I decided to ride her that morning to get her a little more comfortable with everything in there. When I rode her, I just trotted her up to each of the walls and she really rode free and was kind of on the muscle, so I had a good idea she was going to run harder the second go. I think it was just her being comfortable and ready to roll that day. She felt like a completely different horse.”

Brian’s homebred mare may have looked the part in Memphis, but he wasn’t always confident she would have the speed to be a top competitor.

“She was very easy to start on the barrels,” Brian said. “Out of all the ones I’ve ridden and trained, she’s been the easiest. She’s always wanted to work. She’s always wanted to turn. The thing I worried about was that I didn’t know if she’d have the gas to get there. That was concerning to me, because I was wanting one to win on, not just go run the barrels.”

Even though “Bonnie” didn’t show the early speed Brian was hoping to see, slow and steady progress has allowed the mare to blossom.

“When we started taking her to exhibitions, she always worked, she just wasn’t cutting the clock like I thought she should,” Brian explained. “Each time I took her, though, she got two or three tenths better.”

Bonnie made her debut runs in November at the Barrel Futurities of America World Championships in the Juvenile Futurity and then ran again in December at the BBR Oklahoma City



Randee Prindle of Gilman City, Missouri, and 2011 gelding Red Man Jones (Brownie Jones x Dinkys Purple Rain x Dinky’s Red Man) turned in the fastest time of the weekend with a 14.205 to win \$1,494 and Saturday’s Open. The duo also placed second in Sunday’s Open with a 14.414, worth \$909, and clinched the Open average championship for an additional \$579.

Futurity in the Rookie. She had solid performances at both events but didn’t manage to get a win. After that, Brian spent several weeks just riding at home.

“I really got to ride on her then, and she grew up after those two trips,” Brian said. “I took her to Perry, [Georgia], to the Jingle Bell Classic [in mid December], and she won that futurity. That’s when I knew I had one I could probably win some money on throughout the year. Since then, she’s been coming on and doing really well.”

Brian, who started and patterned Bonnie alongside his mother, Stephanie Wheeler, says winning on a horse he’s trained himself makes the victory special.

“This means a lot. I won a lot on her mom—she pretty much taught me

how to win with a horse,” Brian said of SX Dr Peacharita, whom he rode to the 2010 BFA World Championship Derby title, among other wins, and \$114,570 in EquiStat reported earnings. “To raise Bonnie and win with her, it’s a cool feeling. I’ve ridden other horses and won on other horses, but it’s nothing like winning on one you’ve raised. It’s a cool feeling when you created that.”

Jordon Briggs and Famous Lil Jet Best in Derby

Jordon Briggs and Famous Lil Jet are no strangers to the spotlight. They finished the 2021 season as the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association world champions and have seen success on some of the biggest stages in barrel racing. The duo did not disappoint in Memphis, carrying those winning ways right into the Lucky Dog Memphis Derby title.

“Rollo” and Briggs clocked a 14.357 and a 14.544, respectively, to earn first- and seventh-place finishes, respectively, with an aggregate time of 28.901 to clinch the title.

Briggs says she can always count on the 8-year-old gelding to do his part.

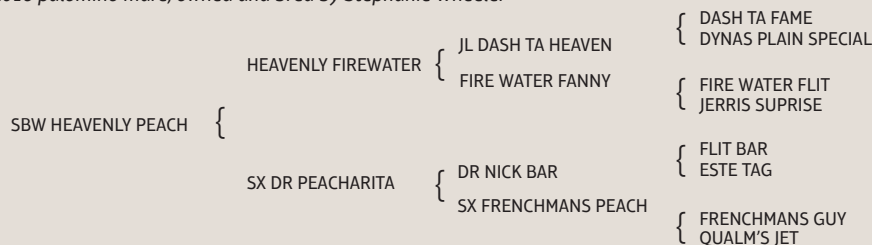
“I always know that Rollo is going to do his job,” Briggs said. “I hate when I mess up, because I feel like I just wasted a run on my horse. [In Memphis], we both did our jobs and we met what our goal was—to qualify for the Breeders Challenge Finale, and of course, make some money.”

For Briggs, the decision to purchase a little sorrel yearling seven years ago reads a bit like a fairytale.

“It really was love at first sight,” Briggs shared. “We went to Busby Quarter Horses to look at Blazin Jetolena-bred horses, because we thought that would be a cool breeding for us to try since I run barrels and my husband ropes. They had pastures full of horses divided by age and sex. Honestly, we just went out in the pasture and picked what we liked first, without knowing how they were bred. Rollo looked like this little bitty calf horse. He was really

SBW Heavenly Peach

2018 palomino mare, owned and bred by Stephanie Wheeler



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Famous Lil Jet

2014 sorrel gelding, owned by Jordon and Justin Briggs, bred by Busby Quarter Horses LLC

FAMOUS LIL JET {	DASH TA FAME	{	FIRST DOWN DASH	{	DASH FOR CASH
			SUDDEN FAME	{	FIRST PRIZE ROSE
	BLAZIN BLACK BEAUTY	{	BLAZIN JETOLENA	{	TINY'S GAY
			LADY PERKS	{	BAR DEARIE
				{	LENAS SUGAR DADDY
				{	BLAZIN JENNIE JET
				{	DASH FOR PERKS
				{	FOLS DEBBIE

short-backed, really short-necked and stout—he looked like this perfect little cow horse, and I fell in love with him. We couldn't take our eyes off him."

Rollo went on to prove himself as the horse dreams are made of, amassing more than \$263,000 in both barrel racing and roping earnings before winning both the WPRA world championship and the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo average in 2021.

"He just understands," Briggs mused. "Every job we give him, he understands

how to do it without overthinking it, and he does everything so honestly."

That honesty was a key factor in Briggs' decision to break her own rule and keep Rollo instead of offering him for sale after his futurity year.

"Learning from [my mom Kristie Peterson's horse] French Flash Hawk ("Bozo") and from Frenchmans Jester, I knew the most important thing about a rodeo horse is how consistent they are. That's how you make a living," Briggs said. "If you're going to keep any horse

and try to make a living with it, you're trying to win a check every time you run—not necessarily first place, but just knowing that when you show up you have a chance to win a check. I wanted to keep him, because I knew there was a very good chance he could make a living for my family."

Rollo's honesty and consistency have proven steadfast for Briggs. The pair closed out the 2021 season without a single barrel down.

"I wish I could say I can train another one just like him any day of the week I want to, but that will probably never happen again," Briggs said with a laugh. "He is a once-in-a-lifetime horse."

For Briggs, the dream that was planted in her heart when she was a young girl poring over stallion books instead of studying for school has come to life in the cherry-red gelding who shows up every day, never quits and always gives the best of himself.

Briggs thanks the Breeders Challenge and Lucky Dog Productions for a great event. She also thanks her sponsors Durango Boots, Classic Equine, Purina, Horse Hair Analysis, Rodeo Rigs, Shiloh Saddlery, Quanta Services, American Hat Company, Rock and Roll Denim and Community Coffee. **BHN**



Top to bottom, left to right: Tolar, Texas, trainer Jordon Briggs and 2014 gelding Famous Lil Jet turned in a 14.357 to win the first go of the Derby and \$1,703. The pair went on to clock a 14.544 in the second go to clinch the Lucky Dog and Breeders Challenge Derby average championships. The duo left Memphis with \$12,168.

Dustin Angelle of Robert, Louisiana, and 2013 gelding VF Born Famous (Born Ta Be Famous x Sleet Glass x Image of Greatness) topped Thursday's leaderboard to win the Open with a 14.308, worth \$1,661.

Dublin, Texas, trainer Kassie Mowry and 2015 gelding Famous Ladies Man (Dash Ta Fame x Lady Perks x Dash For Perks) clocked a 14.266 to win Friday's Open 1D for \$2,606.

Andi Anderson of Arlington, Tennessee, and 2013 mare APH Fiery Breeze (EMW Fiery Revelation x Dear Finny x Breeze Bar Leo) won Sunday's Open with a 14.407, worth \$1,069.