

For Immediate Release

Press Release From: Arizona Horseman's Challenge & Expo

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This year's Arizona Horseman's Challenge & Expo is presenting the Challenge of the Champions this May. The last five years winners will compete for the ultimate title. Who are these five trainers, and what motivates them? Arizona Horseman's Challenge (AZHC) recently asked what motivated them to compete in this colt starting competition? Travis Lyons, 2017 AZHC champion answered "I think we all question where we are as trainers, and would like to put our skills to the test. It is easy to train even the rankest of the horses from the other side of the fence." AZHC 16 champion JJ Anderson said, "I wanted to share my knowledge with the public, demonstrate my technique, and I've always wanted to compete in a colt starting competition, what better place to do it than my home state?" Samantha Jepson the 2015 champion stated, "I grew up watching trainers doing Road to the Horse, Extreme Mustang Makeover, and those types of events. Getting the opportunity to do that myself is a childhood dream come true! I also love how the founders of this competition (AZHC) have designed it to encourage trainers to showcase their skills and techniques, it is an incredible amount of fun to compete in and to Judge!"

When asked if winning the AZHC changed the way they approached training, both JJ Anderson and Samantha Jepson agreed that it really did not change their approach to training, and Travis Lyons added, "Winning the challenge is a nice accomplishment. – I am always chasing a better me in all aspects of my life. In this case we are talking about training horses, or being a winner for a year. I like to look at accomplishments as milestones. I am pleased but never satisfied. I feel that keeps the fire lit and something to work towards."

What was the most important thing you learned competing in the AZHC? JJ Anderson stated he learned to "Trust in his own abilities, regardless of time constraints or the situation." And Samantha Jepson agreed, "I really learned to have confidence in what I am doing, the techniques I used at the AZHC with my filly are exactly what I use at home on horses who come in to be started. The validation of having a group of accomplished horsemen place me was an amazing experience."

Where are you now? JJ Anderson is a Wild Horse Specialist with the WHIP (Wild Horse Inmate Program) in Florence Arizona, helping inmates train mustangs for the BLM. This position has taught me a lot about horse training and what it can do for people not just horses. Travis Lyons is mainly doing colt starting. He enjoys seeing daily progress, and in his opinion, there are less roadblocks and detours on your way to having a well-trained horse, when they come to you with a clean slate. Samantha Jepson is working with a training facility that has multiple assistant trainers, an active student program, and a show team. She enjoys the variety with the showing. Their barn has students and horses showing in ranch riding, roping, barrels, hunters, eventing, and working equitation! "I am thrilled to be working with talented, bold horses and riders!"