



Non Pro Champions Crowned at NRBC

The first Champions of the 2015 National Reining Breeders Classic were crowned Friday, April 17, when the Non Pros battled it out for top honors in the Great Southwest Equestrian Center's Coliseum Arena.

This year was the largest Non Pro in NRBC history, and the combined preliminary and finals payout of \$269,473 proved that.

Non Pro Level 4

Taking top honors and the \$30,000 check was Sarah Locker who rode Heavy Duty Chex to earn a score of 220. "I don't think there are any words to explain how excited I am. First of all that's the first time that I've marked a 220, so that's a really big deal, but then to win something like this is unbelievable."

Locker made her NRBC debut in 2014, but her entry was a little sore before she showed. Although the possibility of her horse getting sore was at the back of her mind, she hoped she'd have better luck. "I'd say better luck is definitely what we had today," she shared following the awards ceremony, where she received a bevy of prizes including a two-horse trailer from Twin Cities Featherlite, a saddle from Martin Saddlery, a Gist Silversmiths buckle, Rios of Mercedes boots, a WonPad from WonPad, a Whisper Bit from M3 Products, a championship ball cap from Just Stitch It, a \$100 gift certificate from San Juan Ranch & Santa Cruz Biotechnology, a saddle blanket from Yucca Flats, a \$50 gift certificate from Thomas Moore Feed, as well as the traditional crystal trophies and other awards from the NRBC.

Locker's family raised Heavy Duty Chex, by their stallion Nu Chex To Cash and out of the good mare Rondas Tio. "Nu Chex To Cash is sterile now; there won't be many more babies to compete so it's really special that I have him. We still have his mother and she's in her 20s now. She has her own stall in the barn and is very special too," Locker said. "It's special when you win a big event but it means so much more when you've raised them. This horse and I have been together from the beginning."

Locker showed the 4-year-old at the National Reining Horse Association Futurity last December, placing seventh in the Non Pro Level 4. "This was our first big show of the year so it was a heck of a way to kick it off. He just keeps getting better and better for me so I'm excited to see how the rest of the year unfolds."

Locker and Heavy Duty Chex finished third in the preliminary round, and she noted that the horse's talent put even more pressure on her. "I was so nervous before I went into the pen. I've been like that ever since I was a little kid – I'd get so nervous I'd almost cry. I knew that I was on a great horse and I think that made it harder, because as a rider you want to show everything that the horse has and his ability, so you want to do the best job by them. I was nervous about doing that but I think I did ok!" she said with a smile.

Locker thanked her family members, who unfortunately weren't able to attend the show. "My brother was here for the preliminaries but had to leave for another horse show because he's a trainer, too. My sister is on her way down now. My parents had to collect studs today and they were taking breaks in between breeding and checking mares so they could watch me. I definitely thank my family because they're a huge support system for me. I also thank the company I work for, Santa Cruz Animal Health, for letting me be here and set up a booth for them and have a good week here at the show."

She noted that she also receives a lot of support from her horse show family. "Casey Deary and his whole crew – it's an amazing family and group to be part of. Thank you to all my friends and everyone for cheering for me. The horse show family is so huge so you never run out of people to thank and be appreciative of having in your life."

So how does Locker feel about the NRBC? "It's such a cool place. I didn't get to experience a lot of it last year, but it is a great facility and the staff is great. Being here as a sponsor, vendor, and exhibitor I've gotten to experience all the different parts of this show and it's just incredible. You get treated so great and everyone involved with putting on the show does such a great job." She added, "Even with all the crazy weather we've had there have been plenty of places to ride and warm up so you're prepared to show – regardless of what the weather is doing. It's a very well-run event, for sure."

There was a three-way tie for the Non Pro Level 4 Reserve Championship between Cade McCutcheon, Kelle Smith, and Josh Hattig. Each rode a horse by Colonels Smoking Gun, marked a 219.5, and took home checks for \$14,650. McCutcheon was riding Custom Made Gun, out of Custom Made Dunit, owned by McQuay Stables, while Smith rode her horse, Dunit The Gunner Way, out of Dun It The Hard Way.