



Championship quest

High Quest Farms' John Alden is hoping four-year-old Windquester will carry him to a 1987 barrel racing or pole bending title. Horse and rider made a successful showing at the recent Quarterama '87 in Toronto.

—Denise McDonald

Bad fall fails to stop area rider from pursuing equestrian goals

By DENISE McDONALD
BALLANTRAE — Nine years ago, barrel racing and pole bending enthusiast John Alden was afraid to ride a horse after being dragged across a field by his first ever mount.

Today, Mr. Alden is a top competitor who recently placed among the finalists for the coveted Zev futurity and Canadian owned and ridden futurity championships at Quarterama '87.

"When I was younger, my parents sent me to take English riding lessons," explained the High Quest Farms equestrian. "I ended up falling off and got my foot caught in the stirrup. I was dragged across a field. Ever since then I've been afraid to ride and am still nervous of English saddles with their smaller stirrup irons."

According to Mr. Alden, he was eventually talked into riding western partly because that style has bigger stirrups.

"When I went to purchase my first horse Cinch Bid in 1978, I was told she was a big, easy-going pleasure horse," the Ballantrae-based rider recalled. "But I only tried her at the walk and trot because I was afraid to go any faster. When I brought her home and tried her at a lope, she ran like a fool."

Though he claimed to still be "not at all excited about going quickly," he realized if he was going to keep the horse, they were going to have to reach a compromise.

"I knew she wasn't going to go slowly, so I decided it was time I learned to go fast," Mr. Alden said.

What proved to be an amiable partnership resulted in Cinch Bid and her rider securing the overall Ontario Barrel Racing Championship in 1979.

Retired from competition in 1980, Cinch Bid was sold two years ago and, according to Mr. Alden, is "still happily barrel racing today."

However, his partnership with that mount lives on through the new horse he rode at Quarterama '87, four-year-old Windquester.

Quester is the product of two champions, according to the rider. "Her sire was Windjammer, the Ontario barrel racing champion in 1979, and her mother was Cinch Bid. I'm hoping that match automatically gives me a 1987 champion, or that's the plan anyway."

"Ideally, I'd like to see her run an under 20 second pole-bending course," Mr. Alden continued. "But I'm just pleased she has done as well as she has. After all, this is her first major show. There may not have been a lot of competitors, but the horses were still tough."

Windquester and Mr. Alden made an admirable showing for York Region at this year's Quarterama, placing third in pole-bending and ranking among the finalists in the Zev and Canadian owned and ridden futurities.

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