

{ PARA-REINING }

Degree of Difficulty

FOR PARA REINERS THE BAR IS EVEN HIGHER.

BY CAROL TRIMMER, PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALTEBERRY

THE TERM “DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY” IS FAMILIAR TO reiners all around the world. It’s found in the *NRHA Handbook*, in the *NRHA Judges Guide* and in reining articles in every manner of publication. It’s a topic of conversation for judges, trainers/coaches, non pros, owners, spectators and breeders. At the 2014 NRHA Futurity & Adequan® North American Affiliate Championship Show it took on new meaning. It was apparent that “degree of difficulty” standards were set even higher for those riders competing in para reining (formerly known to NRHA members as adaptive reining).

The class took place on the last day of competition in Barn 6 at State Fair Park and featured para riders aboard reining horses they own or donated for the competition by their owners. Many of the riders have been competing in para dressage.

Lara Oles won the inaugural Para Reining championship at the NRHA Futurity Show. Oles rode Bob Thompson’s Western Whiz, a 12-year-old bay gelding with more than \$123,000 in NRHA Lifetime Earnings. With the exception of an under-spin, Oles ran her pattern with precision and confidence. Ending her run with a big smile, she enjoyed her time on Western Whiz and was pleased with their ride. Trainer Mike Moser coached Lara, who incidentally was born in 1966, the year that NRHA was incorporated and the first NRHA Futurity was held in Columbus, Ohio.

Oles was left with physical disabilities following a 2006 skiing accident. But those disabilities haven’t dampened her desire to compete. She is well known in the Utah horse community as a determined competitor and is the state’s first internationally classified Para Dressage rider. Lara lives in Heber, Utah, with her husband, Dan, and works full-time for the U.S.

Forest Service. She hopes to make the 2016 Paralympics on the Para Dressage Team. In the meantime, plans are for Lara to compete in Arizona at the Sun Circuit in the para reining class. Oles, who admitted she is hooked on Reining said, “Thanks again to NRHA and all the sponsors for such a fun class! ... reining people are the best!”

Briana K. Bartlett, Tecumseh, Nebraska, was just a half-point behind Oles. Her reining partner was her own 2003 gelding, Chromed Tejon, which she purchased in July 2014 from then owner Antonio Lama. This gelding has an extensive show record and seems to fit Bartlett to a tee. Her ride was smooth with right-on maneuvers and an enthusiasm found in reiners worldwide.

Watching these riders it is evident that they could be competitive in able-bodied competition. Don’t be surprised if you see them showing in entry-level classes in the future and challenging the degree of difficulty. ♦

Thanks to awards sponsors: Mike Deer, Rita Reed Harris, Great King Pine/George and Patti Widener, Tom and Jennifer Hoyt and the Reining Horse Sports Foundation.

| PARA-REINING | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| RIDER | HORSE | OWNER |
| 1. Lara Oles | Western Whiz | Robert N. Thompson |
| 2. Briana K. Bartlett | Chromed Tejon | Briana K. Bartlett |
| 3. Cole E. Jacobs | Ruf N Loaded | Cole E. Jacobs |
| 4. Lise Yervasi | Remin Star | Gail H. Klapper |
| 5. Deidre Hannah | Whiz Pop Bang | Charity Smith |



Lara Oles and Western Whiz