



Bonnie, Clyde and the Kid

Smoky Pritchett's gang of Paint Horses keeps growing, thanks to one mare's ability to produce reined cow horses that win

by KIM GUENTHER

Watching her walk through the pasture, a stocky Paint colt following closely by her side, you can see she has a presence, an aura of intensity that demands your attention.

Bonnie Smoke is never quite at ease, not even when grazing. The slightest movement or softest sound causes every muscle in her quivering white body to snap to attention.

Perhaps it is the years she spent blowing away the competition that keeps "Bonnie" on the defensive. Or maybe it is just in her blood. After all, she is a "Gun Smoke" mare.

Whatever the case, Bonnie Smoke is a name that will not soon be forgotten in the world of reined cow horses.

In her prime, the almost all-white mare was as notorious for controlling a cow as she was for her color. Today, the inherent cow sense displayed by Bonnie's two performing offspring – Bonnies Kid and Freckle Face Clyde – has placed their dam, themselves, and their younger siblings on the most wanted list of many reined cow horse enthusiasts.

Leading this gang of Painted athletes to the championships they have won is

California trainer Smoky Pritchett of Red Bluff. A past-president of the National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA), Pritchett had made five AQHA Supreme Champions and ridden horses to NRCHA wins long before he purchased the spindly Bonnie Smoke.

"I went to a sale at Rapp Ranch in Napa, Calif., looking for a 2-year-old filly to buy," said Pritchett. "Of the ones there, Bonnie suited me the best. She was built the way I like a cow horse to be built – short cannon bones, hocks really low to the ground, and a short back. It was amazing how she could move around in a stall."

Bred by Big D Products of Norco, Calif., Bonnie also sported the bloodlines Pritchett was looking for. Her sire, Mr Gun Smoke AQHA, earned \$8,476 in National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) competition. But the stallion is better recognized through the numerous reined cow horse, cutting and reining championships his get have won. He sired 24 AQHA Champions and one APHA Champion, Miss Smokette.



Left:
"They just keep getting whiter and whiter," said Smoky Pritchett of Bonnie Smoke's latest produce, "Stranger," a colt sired by Lenas Award AQHA. Bonnie Smoke has produced six Paint foals, two with combined NRCHA and NCHA earnings in excess of \$30,000.

Right:
With trainer Pritchett in the saddle, Bonnie Smoke won more than \$27,000 in NRCHA and NCHA competition during the mid-1980s.

Pritchett's "gang" includes, from left: "Stranger," Bonnie Smoke and Linda Pritchett, Freckle Face Clyde and owner Terry Ratto, Bonnie Lena and Kelly Pritchett, Bonnies Kid, Pritchett and Freckle Face Smoke.

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Bonnie Smoke's dam, Ropers Calcutta, is the 1978 and 1979 APHA National Champion Working Cow Horse. She is sired by Skippa Rope and out of an unregistered mare.

"For the way Bonnie was bred, the way she looked and the way she moved, she was a good buy in those days because she was a Paint," said Pritchett. "If she had been purple, I still would have bought her. I thought she was built and bred to work a cow."

"Today, because of her color, she would probably be more expensive than if she were solid."

When Pritchett bought Bonnie in the early spring of her 2-year-old year, she came to his Iron Canyon Ranch with 60 days of riding and anything but a laid-back attitude.

"She was hot-blooded, high-strung and a little silly," said Smoky. "I don't necessarily like a horse like that, but she was such a great athlete that I just accepted it as part of the package."

"A lot of the really good Gun Smoke mares are a hot type of horse. It seems like the ones built like this mare, narrow, with a little bit of a Thoroughbred look about them, are the better performers and producers."

And Bonnie Smoke did perform. In her first competition, the 1984 California Reined Cow Horse Association (CRCHA) World Championship Snaffle Bit Futurity, the aggressive mare placed fifth in the finals. At the time, she was the highest-placing Paint ever at that futurity.

At the 1984 Montana Reined Cow Horse Snaffle Bit Futurity, Bonnie won the fence work in the go-rounds of the competition. She continued her winning ways in the finals, clinching the futurity championship.

In other major events that year, Bonnie was a top-10 finalist at the Southern Oregon Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity. At the Idaho Reined Cow Horse Association (IRCHA) Snaffle Bit Futurity, she



won the herd work in the go-rounds and qualified for the finals.

In 1985, Bonnie placed third at the CRCHA Reined Cow Horse Snaffle Bit Maturity, sending the dirt flying and earning 75-point scores in the finals of the fence work.

Bonnie returned to the 1985 IRCHA snaffle bit event with a vengeance. Having lost a cow in the finals of the 1984 IRCHA futurity, the explosive mare not only won the herd work in the maturity go-rounds, but captured the event championship as well.

Focusing his mare's talent on one type of competition, rather than the three areas of expertise required in reined cow horse competitions, Pritchett began entering Bonnie Smoke solely in cutting competitions. In 1985 the mare won the Medford Paint Cutting Futurity in Medford, Ore. She also placed ninth in the finals of the Klamath Kow Cutters Cutting Maturity in Klamath Falls, Ore.

In 1986, Bonnie earned an APHA Register of Merit in Open cutting. She finished the year and her show career with more than \$27,000 in combined NRCHA and NCHA earnings.

Having proven herself in the show ring, Pritchett decided that for 1987 Bonnie's challenge would be to produce a foal as athletic and as "full of cow" as she was.

"Originally, I bought Bonnie with the intention of just showing her," said Pritchett. "I was offered quite a bit of money for her when she was a 3-year-old, but turned it down. She was such a super horse that I decided to keep her and breed her."

In 1987, Bonnie produced a Paint foal sired by Reminic AQHA. Unfortunately, the foal had to be put down due to an injury.

That same year, Bonnie was bred to Freckle Faced Kid, a Quarter Horse stallion Pritchett had ridden to 1988 championships at both the IRCHA and Southern Oregon

Bonnie Smoke's first foal sired by Freckle Faced Kid AQHA was Bonnies Kid. Pritchett has ridden the sorrel overo gelding to an NCHA Certificate of Ability and more than \$22,000 in winnings at NCHA and NRCHA competitions.

MIDGE PHOTO



Cow Horse Association snaffle bit futurities. Freckle Faced Kid is sired by Colonel Freckles and is out of Docs Missy Bar by Doc Bar.

The result of the first cross between Bonnie Smoke and Freckle Faced Kid was a 1988 sorrel overo colt named Bonnies Kid.

"'Kid' is an exceptional little horse," said Pritchett of his gelding. "He's a natural cow horse and a big stopper. Of the horses I have taken to the futurity (NRCHA World Championship Futurity), Kid is the one I thought I could win with."

At the 1991 NRCHA futurity, Kid tied to win the reined work in the go-rounds with a score of 148. He also won the preliminaries of the fence work with a 151.

Kid was leading for the championship of the futurity going into the finals, but a non-performing cow he faced in the fence work cost him points. The gelding finished the futurity in third place.

In cutting, Kid has earned an NCHA Certificate of Ability. In 1991, he was a finalist at the Pacific Coast Cutting Horse Association Gelding Stakes.

Although Kid has combined NRCHA and NCHA earnings of more than \$22,000, the gelding may soon be making his moves at high school rodeos.

"My youngest daughter, Kelly, has got the bug now," said Pritchett, father of three girls, "so I guess we'll be taking Kid to some cuttings at the high school rodeos."

"The horses are something I have never pushed on the girls," Pritchett continued, "because they have always been involved in so many school activities. Cheerleading and playing school sports is something they can never do again, but the horses are something they can always come back to if they chose."

With Kid given a temporary break from

Open cattle competition, it has been his younger brother, "Clyde," that has been adding color to the reined cow horse circuit. Another product of the Bonnie Smoke and Freckle Faced Kid cross, Freckle Face Clyde is a 4-year-old sorrel tobiano owned by Terry Ratto of San Mateo, Calif.

At the 1992 NRCHA World Championship Futurity, Pritchett rode Clyde to third place in the preliminaries of the reined work. The pair failed to make the finals, however, because of a "bad break" in the herd work.

This year, however, Clyde has proven he is the horse to beat. At the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Stakes, held in March in Tulare, Calif., he won the Open championship.

In June, the flashy performer swept the finals of the herd, reined and fence work at the Harry Rose Hackamore Classic in Tulare, Calif., winning the Open championship by five points.

Clyde added another reined cow horse title to his list of accomplishments the following month when he won the Open Hackamore class at the Jaquima Classic in Salinas, Calif. The gelding won the finals of both the reined and the fence work, scoring 76 and 74 points respectively.

September saw Clyde finish third in the finals of the Open Hackamore class at the 1993 NRCHA World Championship Futurity in Fresno, Calif.

"Clyde has a big following out here in the cow horse world," said Pritchett. "He's a dynamic type of a horse when he's performing, and that flashy color makes it easy for people to recognize him."

Pritchett plans to show Clyde in reined cow horse competition at the Reno Championship Futurity, Nov. 25-28, before handing

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Pritchett has ridden Freckle Face Clyde, Bonnie Smoke's second foal, to numerous reined cow horse wins in 1993, including the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Stakes Open championship. The gelding is owned by Terry Ratto of San Mateo, Calif.



MIDGE PHOTO

Bonnie Smoke

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the reins over to Clyde's owner. Ratto is looking forward to competing on Clyde in NRCHA non-pro events and APHA-approved shows next year.

"When Terry saw Clyde, he really liked him," said Pritchett, "but I wasn't quite ready to sell him. So Terry and I talked about Clyde for a while, and it was finally decided that he could buy Clyde as long as I got to keep him.

"Next year, it's going to be Terry's turn."

Pritchett, however, will not be without a Paint mount. He is currently preparing Freckle Face Smoke – the third of Bonnie's foals sired by Freckle Faced Kid – for reined cow horse competition next year. "Smoke," unlike his two older brothers, has been given the opportunity to remain a stallion.

"Smoky has never liked having a lot of studs on the place," said Linda, Pritchett's wife of 14 years. "Almost every colt our mares produce is gelded. No one wants to breed to a mediocre or above-average stallion, they want something more."

It may be safe to assume that Freckle Face Smoke, with his one blue eye and loud tobiano markings, may well have that "something more," that breeders are looking for.

"We are seriously thinking about syndicating him," said Pritchett. "There are several people already interested in him, but first we plan on showing him. After that, we'll see what happens."

Following the arrival of Freckle Face Smoke, Pritchett broke with what had become a tradition and bred Bonnie Smoke to another of his Quarter Horse stallions, Jab O Lena. The result is a bay tobiano filly

named Bonnie Lena.

"I thought I'd try something different," said Pritchett of his decision to breed Bonnie to a different stallion. "I like the laid-back style of Jab O Lena, so it will be interesting to see what this filly can do."

Jab O Lena is sired by Doc O'Lena and is out of Jabalina Chex by King Fritz. The stallion has several NCHA wins and has earned an NCHA Certificate of Ability.

To add even more variety to the herd of Bonnie Smoke crosses grazing the pastures of Iron Canyon Ranch, in 1992 Pritchett bred Bonnie to yet another of his Quarter Horse stallions, Lena's Award. Lena's Award, sired by Colonel Freckles and out of Belinda Lena by Doc O'Lena, won the 1990 reined cow horse championships at both the California and Oregon snaffle bit futurities.

The result of the Bonnie Smoke and Lena's Award cross is a blue-eyed, predominantly white colt nicknamed Stranger.

This year, Bonnie was bred back to Freckle Faced Kid for a 1994 foal. The big debate at the Iron Canyon Ranch is whether or not this foal, too, will be a Paint.

"About two weeks before Bonnie is ready to foal," said Pritchett, "there is always a lot of anticipation around here. Everybody on our place starts getting excited, wondering how much white Bonnie's foal is going to have on it. It seems like each year, they keep getting whiter and whiter.

"Bonnie was a great performer," continued Pritchett, "and now she's turning out to be a great producer. It's often said that a horseman will probably own only one great horse in his lifetime. Maybe Bonnie Smoke is mine."