

BY HEATHER LOVERIDGE

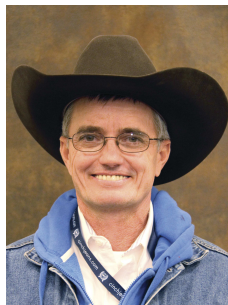
Michael Jeffcoat, Waurika, Oklahoma

AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, WHEN MICHAEL Jeffcoat began attending the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, some of Reining's greats were also there. Since he boarded his horse across the street from the university, he got to ride with Larry Kasten, Tom Pierson, Scott McCutcheon and others.

"That was during the mid-80s ... it was like a who's-who of Reining," Jeffcoat said. "I started showing reiners a few years later, and, over the years, I've found I really like the mental aspect of Reining and the individual accomplishments it offers."

Since then, Jeffcoat, a long-time county extension educator with Oklahoma's cooperative extension service, has enjoyed a successful non pro career.

"This past year Marco Formentin helped me. He's been my advisor, trainer, coach and personality adjustor,"



Jeffcoat laughed. "He did a very good job coaching me and my horse—we got to where we did because of him."

Formentin helped Jeffcoat and Spooks Gotta Run ("Possum") win the level 2 non pro and Prime Time non pro championships at the 2011 Cinch NRHA Non Pro Futurity.

"We set some [show] goals and achieved most of them," Jeffcoat said. "I had an unbelievable year. In just three shows I doubled my lifetime earnings, which I had accumulated since 1988."

Jeffcoat's wife, Katherine, actually picked out the stallion as a two-year-old and was Jeffcoat's number-one fan throughout 2011.

"We are both very excited about the future. We bought Possum to show as well as breed to my Jacspin mares," he said. "We're very much looking forward to his offspring." ♦

CURRENT TOP 20 <i>(As of shows input December 12, 2011)</i>		
	Rider	Earnings
1	Mandy McCutcheon	\$126,902
2	Shaunda Ruckman	\$113,834
3	Manuel Bonzano	\$86,401
4	Jose Vazquez	\$81,416
5	Veronica St-Onge	\$79,238
6	Jessica Sternberg	\$69,383
7	Claudio Risso	\$59,032
8	Quincy Allen	\$53,602
9	Manuel Cortesi	\$50,860
10	Samantha Griffin	\$44,747
11	Michael Jeffcoat	\$39,423
12	Lance Griffin	\$38,578
13	Matthew Armenta	\$37,636
14	Javier Melo	\$37,521
15	Josiane Gauthier	\$36,618
16	Tami Nelson	\$36,030
17	Abby Lengel	\$34,854
18	Tina Mantl	\$33,528
19	Sally Broten	\$33,389
20	Felix Schnabel	\$32,911

Abby Lengel, Burlington, Colorado

WHEN SHE WAS NINE YEARS OLD, ABBY LENGEL BEGAN TAKING LESSONS from reining trainer Drake Johnson. Even though Lengel was young, she knew she wanted to compete in Reining. She held on to her dream, kept taking lessons from Johnson and when she turned 16, her parents bought her a reining horse.

"I didn't know anything when I first started lessons," Lengel said. "Drake has brought me so far and been so encouraging and patient."

Though she's only been showing a little more than five years, Lengel has already exceeded her own expectations.

"Last year at the (2011 Cinch NRHA Non Pro) Futurity my goal was to make the level 4 non pro finals. I made the finals, plus I ended up winning the go-round in levels 1 and 2. I won over \$32,000. I never dreamed that was ever going to happen," she said.



Lengel, currently a junior at West Texas A&M majoring in agriculture business, plans to keep her mare, Einsteinsheykiss, and show as much as she can this year.

"I just love how detailed and precise Reining is. There are so many variables, so many things to work on," Lengel said. "I'm not sure what the future holds, but I know I'll always be involved with Reining in some way."

Though Lengel and her three siblings grew up on the family farm, she's the only one involved with horses.

"I'm very blessed that my family supports me. They go to as many shows as they can," she said. "None of this would have been possible without my parents supporting me financially. I'm very grateful for that." ♦