

MOTHER knew best

Kelle Smith wins second title in four years with a horse her mother found.

Two years ago in Oklahoma City, Kelle Smith's mother, Joyce Chamberlain, went shopping for a hot new reining prospect during the 2004 NRHA Futurity finals. Kelle and her husband, Belle Center, Ohio, horse trainer Sam Smith, went along.

Chamberlain and the Smiths headed in separate directions for a while, but later Kelle and Sam found her closely inspecting a yearling daughter of Conquistador Whiz out of Actress Anna by Hollywood Jac 86. Kelle Smith and that mare, JD Conquista Anna, won the 2006 NRHA Non-Pro Championship on Dec. 1 in Oklahoma City with a 221 to earn \$37,189.

"My mom was in the stall petting her," Kelle Smith said as she recalled the first time she ever saw the smooth-moving mare she now calls "Anna Banana." "My mom is a little old gray-haired lady. Sam pulled her out of the stall and I warned her."

Kelle Smith, a 2003 NRHA Non-Pro Futurity and the 2004 NRHA Non-Pro Derby winner, and Sam Smith, an Open division winner of about \$400,000 since 1988, according to *Equi-Stat* records, noticed the mare looked pretty good. After checking out her breeding, they both liked her, but Kelle and Sam had not looked at the mare until finding her with Kelle's mom.

"She is the one that deserves all the credit for this" Kelle said. "If she had not found her at the sale as a yearling, we wouldn't have bought her. I told her it's a risk when you buy a yearling. It obviously worked out."

Chamberlain, the mare's unofficial part owner, nearly missed seeing her daughter ride the mare to their big win. She got stuck in a snowstorm in Tulsa and arrived in Oklahoma City shortly before the Non-Pro finals.

"She got here just before it started," Smith said. "She's just ecstatic about the whole thing."

Smith, of course, was also quite happy about the final-round performance she received from a mare she primarily trained on her own. Her husband had primarily trained her 2004 NRHA Non-Pro winner, See Ya At Seven, a gelding by Hollywood Eighty Six out of Pure Lil Peppy, and her 2004 NRHA Derby Champion Chexanicki, a mare by Bueno Chexanic out of DS Fancy Footwork. She did not start riding See Ya At Seven until October of his 3-year-old season, but she rode JD Conquista Anna from the start.

"This one has been more my project," Smith said. "I started riding her myself in June of her 2-year-old year. Obviously, with Sam's help, she was always just wonderful."

During the summer, Smith and JD Conquista Anna earned \$1,818 and \$1,444 checks with No. 1 and No. 2 finishes during two Ohio reining events, and \$1,730 with a No. 7 finish in the Non-Pro finals at the Tulsa Reining Classic. At October's All American Quarter Horse Congress in Columbus, Ohio, the mare broke her gait in the finals, but still finished eighth to earn \$2,091.

"She's never been bad. It's just been little problems, until tonight," Smith said. "Actually, she was perfect in the go-round, too."

She also picked up another \$5,944 in Oklahoma City by guiding another finalist, Smart Chic O Bar, a mare by Smart Chic O Olena out of Sonitalena Bar, to a tie for ninth in the finals with a 214.5. She and that horse marked a 217.5 in the first go, matching the first-go score she posted with JD Conquista Anna.

Mandy McCutcheon, Aubrey, Texas, finished as the Reserve Champion and the third-place rider, to earn a combined \$52,176 in the Non-Pro finals. She set the bar high from the No. 7 draw in the 31-horse finals with a 219.5 on I Spin For Chics, a stallion by



Kelle Smith and JJ Conquista Anna marked a 221 in the Non-Pro Futurity finals to earn \$37,189.

Tangys Classy Peppy out of Chics Koko Angel by Smart Chic Olena, owned by her father, Tim McQuay. McCutcheon and SLJ Sweet N Juicy, a daughter of Smart Like Juice out of Jacks My Sugar Daddy, that she and her husband, Tom McCutcheon, own, placed third with a 217.5 from the No. 1 draw.

Knowing his wife would compete with JD Conquista Anna from the No. 22 draw, Sam Smith felt confident after those runs.

"I knew if the mare competed the way she's capable of, she would win," he said. "The way that this mare had been working here, I had told someone she could make a couple of mistakes and still mark a 219."

Everything clicked during Kelle Smith's finals run with Anna Banana.

She asked the horse for more than she had ever asked for in the past. The mare had no problem reading non-verbal cues during a high-octane run featuring plenty of speed and precision on the circles and the spins, plus several outstanding slides.

"She was always saying, 'What next, Kelle? What next?' There was nothing I would change, except maybe I could be in a little better shape and ride a little harder. I was running out of breath and straggling near the end," Kelle said. "I finally decided to say 'whoa' just a little bit early."

Asked about Kelle's performance, Sam Smith said he does not tell his wife how to ride. The couple owns 10 horses. Sam trains others for a long list of clients. He does help Kelle train, but



Kelle Smith, her husband, Sam Smith, and JJ Conquista Anna celebrate their success along with, at left, Kelle's mother, Joyce Chamberlain, and at right, Sam's dad, Ray Smith. Also pictured at left is family friend George Shifrin, who owns Conquistador Whiz.

she adds her own twists, too.

"She's not my student," he said of the longtime horsewoman he married in May 1998. "She has studied reining and has developed her own style and her own deal that really works for her. When she gets a horse that fits her, like this mare, they're just real hard to beat."

Since 1999, Kelle Smith has earned \$253,434 in reining. The Smiths plan to keep JD Conquista Anna, with Kelle continuing to ride her in several major derby events.

"That will be her life for a few years," she said. Sam Smith said the mare is an outstanding broodmare prospect, but conceded due to his wife's recent and probable future success with her, JD Conquista Anna's days as a mother will probably wait for a while.

Kelle enjoyed the fact that she had 19 horses between her first and her second finals rides in Oklahoma City. She was still nervous after she and JD Conquista Anna marked their 221 from the No. 22 draw. There were still nine horses and riders to go. She watched part of one of her fellow riders' runs, then left the stands because she couldn't bear to watch the rest.

"They are your friends and you want them to do well, but you cheer for yourself a little bit more," Kelle said.

Aside from Kelle Smith, the person who probably smiled the most after her victory was her mother.

"My mom has been a very big part of my entire life showing," Smith said. "We went to horse shows from the time I was 4 years old. I wanted her to be proud. That's the first thing that I thought of when we won."

Asked how the pair planned to celebrate a victory on the horse that her mom found at a sale, Smith said, "We'll go shopping."

The next day in Oklahoma City,

another Futurity Prospect Sale took place in a barn adjacent to the Coliseum arena. —MT

Reserve Champion

Mandy McCutcheon didn't mind finishing a close second in the Non-Pro finals with a 219.5 aboard I Spin For Chics, a converted cow horse stallion that had previously competed at one event: the 2006 NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno, Nev.

The 29-year-old Aubrey, Texas, rider and the son of Tangys Classy Peppy out of Chics Koko Angel by Smart Chic Olena marked a 219.5 during the Dec. 1 finals in Oklahoma City. The stallion was purchased in early October by her father, legendary Texas reining horse trainer Tim McQuay. McCutcheon and I Spin For Chics also marked a 224 in the first go and earned \$29,209 at their first reining event.

"I had no idea how he was going to walk in there and show," McCutcheon said. "I thought he could go in there and start looking for cows. He didn't. He walked in there and stayed hooked up."

McCutcheon also placed third in the Non-Pro finals with a 217.5 aboard SLR Sweet N Juicy, a daughter of Smart Like Juice out of Jacks My Sugar Daddy by Hollywood Jac 86, a much more experienced reiner that she and her husband, trainer Tom McCutcheon, co-own. She and SLR Sweet N Juicy earned \$22,967 even though McCutcheon said she nearly lost her shirt during their run.

Winning a combined \$52,176 allowed McCutcheon to move within \$50,000 of becoming the first woman and the first non-pro rider to earn more than \$1 million as a reining horse rider. In all likelihood, she and Tom will also soon become the first husband-and-wife duo to each earn more than \$1 million. Tom McCutcheon moved within less than \$40,000 of becoming the next reiner



Non-Pro Reserve Champions Mandy McCutcheon and I Spin For Chics teamed up for an impressive debut in Oklahoma City, scoring a 219.5 for Reserve.

in NRHA history to top \$1 million by earning \$30,048 in Oklahoma during the Open Futurity finals.

"I feel so fortunate it's such a family thing for us," said Mandy McCutcheon, whose father, Tim, was the first reining horse rider to earn more than \$2 million. Her mother, Colleen McQuay, is also a respected hunter/jumper rider and Mandy occasionally competes in that discipline, too.

"There's no way I could do it without my parents and Tom and the people that work for both of them. They are the ones that make it happen," McCutcheon said.

I Spin For Chics placed 11th in the Non-Pro finals with then-owner Rachel Eady at the National Reined Cow Horse Association Snaffle Bit Futurity in late September to earn \$5,243. He then ended up in the McQuays' barn and under McCutcheon's saddle thanks to a tip from two friends, trainer Todd Crawford and a former McQuay employee, Debby Arballo. They noticed the horse's reining potential in Reno and quickly called Tim McQuay.

"He asked them how much he would

cost, then said, 'Bring him home, I'll try him,' McCutcheon said. "We trust their opinion."

The only real problem since then was that the horse came down with a severe fever in the process of getting transported to Texas.

"He was real sick," McCutcheon said. "We didn't know if he was even going to make it. About 10 days after he got home, he started getting better and we started riding him. He just had to get used to my dad's program a little bit and learn what we do."

I Spin For Chics "just has a real good feel and he fits me really well," McCutcheon said.

That was not as true of a snap-on shirt that Mandy wore during her first finals ride. Midway through her third-place finish with SLJ Sweet N Juicy, McCutcheon's shirt brushed against the saddle horn and several snaps popped loose. The shirt stayed on and McCutcheon was wearing a T-shirt beneath it, but the incident did distract her a bit.

"It's a good thing she's as good as she is because her last two stops were on