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2009 VERSATILITY RANCH HORSE WORLD CHAMPION

WHISKEY FOR MY HORSE.

BY [CHRISTINE HAMILTON](#), JOURNAL EDITOR



Mike Major and Smart Whiskey Doc of Fowler, Colorado, won the 2009 versatility ranch horse world championship. AQHA Executive Vice



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President Bill Brewer, and Emilee Hoffner and Tom Lenz, D.V.M., of Fort Dodge Animal Health, the show's title sponsor, presented the awards.

Mike Major and Smart Whiskey Doc of Fowler, Colorado, have earned several honors in versatility ranch horse competition, including the 2008 reserve world championship. After last year's show, Mike and his wife, Holly, felt the horse deserved a chance to return in 2009. After a tough two days of competition against people he considers friends, Mike and "Whiskey" rode out of the Fort Dodge Versatility World arena with the gold trophy – they won the ranch conformation and cutting and earned seconds in ranch trail, ranch riding and working ranch horse. Holly and their daughters, Shanae and 6-week-old Kaya, were in the stands, cheering. "I'm a very blessed man," Mike said. When he says that, he means blessed with exactly who was there: family, friends and his horse.

Q. What does this win tonight mean for you and Holly?

Mike: To just give credit to our horse. He's a great horse, and we've got to give credit to the Lord because God's blessed us with this horse. It's hard to come up with the words.

Q. Did you feel like you had to come back this year?

Mike: He's done awfully well in these versatility ranch horse competitions, so we wanted to try and win a world championship for him. We're maybe thinking about retiring him in the versatility and going on to do some other things. He's won the world, so we can end on the top.

Q. Would you please walk me through the competition?

Mike: The plan was to try not to make any mistakes. The trail was our first class this year, and worrying about not dropping my bridle was a big issue with me! *(He laughed; Mike forgot to drop his bridle in the trail at this show in 2008.)* Try not to push too hard, but try to place and stay in the top three in each class. If you win some, win them. In this competition, to me, a lot of people think that you're competing against your opposition, but to me, I'm just competing against myself. The versatility is all about the little things, not making little mistakes, they just cost you placings.

Whiskey did good. In the trail, he spooked at that great, big log we had to drag. We had no trouble dragging it, but when we loped around, he thought, what in the world is that? In the conformation, we've been really trying to feed him up so he would show good. I was really happy that they picked him to win it. The cutting and the cow horse were tough, but he tries. Whiskey's got a big heart.

Q. What's coming up this year for you, competition-wise?

Mike: We have some Whiskey daughters that are making nice horses. We have a Shining Spark stud that just turned 4, and we have a (National Reined Cow Horse Association) Futurity prospect by our Smart Little Lena stud. In a couple of weeks, we're going to try to do the World's Greatest Horseman on Whiskey. We're entered in it, and if he doesn't get too sore, we're going to try to make it. We qualified Whiskey and the Shining Spark stud to go to the Ranch Horse Association of America finals in Abilene, Texas.

Q. What was it like to compete against this group of riders?

Mike: They are all a bunch of great people. It goes without saying, any of the riders could win this event on any given day. I thought it was tough; I had to really try to stay hooked up on each class. It goes back to not trying to beat anybody, but just keep from making mistakes. With the five classes, it's tough, non-stop adrenaline for two days.

Fun Fact: When Mike remembered to drop Whiskey's bridle in his ranch trail go this year, the crowd in the Coliseum whistled. "I put the bridle rein over his neck, and then I heard the people whistling up in the grandstands," Mike said with a laugh. "I had to look over and smile at everybody."

WINNER STATS

Horse: Smart Whiskey Doc
1999 stallion by Paddys Irish Whiskey x Smart Little Carol by Smart Little Aleck

Exhibitor: Mike Major, Fowler, Colorado
Owner: Mike and Holly Major, Fowler, Colorado

Total class entries: 10

Individual class standings:
ranch horse cutting - second
ranch horse riding - second
ranch horse trail - second
working ranch horse - first
ranch horse conformation - first

World Champion Prizes: Custom-designed gold-tone trophy, courtesy of Fort Dodge Versatility Ranch Horse World Championship; sterling silver buckle, courtesy of Montana Silversmiths; specially designed logoed jacket and world champion patch, courtesy of Cripple Creek Outerwear; neck wreath.

TOP FIVE

1. Smart Whiskey Doc and Mike Major, Fowler, Colorado
2. Stylish Future and Chance O'Neal, Guthrie, Texas
3. Sixsation and Betty Lou Valdez, La Junta, Colorado
4. Chic Packin and Kris Wilson, Lubbock, Texas
5. Josephs Catchum All and Jimbo Humphreys, Dickens, Texas

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