

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

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Piedmont horse and rider on top of the Ford Youth World

in Ranch Riding

Ann Elizabeth Tebow gazed into the stall at her American Quarter Horse Vinny.

It was still a few hours before Tebow, 18, was scheduled to show the 8-year-old gray gelding in ranch riding prelims on Monday during the Built Ford Tough American Quarter Horse Youth Association (AQHYA) World Championship Show at State Fair Park.

"I looked at him in the stall earlier today and I thought, 'I want to do this for you, I want to do good so that you know that you deserve it,' because he does. He works really hard for me," said the recent Piedmont High School graduate.

Vinny, whose registered name is "FS Vintage Sidekick," and Tebow are an example of the teamwork between rider and horse displayed at horse shows and other equestrian events throughout Oklahoma.

"People don't realize how they have their own personalities," she said of horses. "They're just like people because everyone's different and they each have their own little quirks. It took us a long time to get on the same page."

Not only did they make it to the same page but on Tuesday evening Tebow and Vinny won the 2016 world championship in ranch riding.

"That's what makes this so much more special is because we did get through those hard times," Tebow said Wednesday. "It shows that if you work hard and keep going you can accomplish anything and your dreams can come true. Everything we went through together just made it that much sweeter."

The Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show is the pinnacle event for American Quarter Horse exhibitors ages 18 and under around the world, who must qualify for the event by earning a

predetermined number of points to compete in each of the classes representing halter, English and western disciplines.

The Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show, which continues through Saturday (August 13) has an economic impact on the Oklahoma City area of more than \$10.3 million. The show features more than 2,180 entries from the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom with exhibitors competing for 35 world championships.

Within all those entries are 761 exhibitors and 1,096 horses. That's a lot of teamwork between horses and riders – and a lot of personalities.

Tebow, the 2015-2016 AQHYA National President, has shown Vinny, owned by her mother Vicki Tebow, for a just a few years now and they didn't click right away.

Some friendships – including many that last for a long time – take time to develop.

“The problem is that we have similar personalities,” she said. “We're both curious and like to think a lot about things. He's really curious so when we get in the show pen sometimes he's like ‘Oh what's over here?’ and I'm like ‘Vinny, we've got to pay attention right now, we're supposed to be working.’”

There were times Tebow thought briefly about giving up. Instead, they persevered and got to know each other.

“He's too smart for his own good, which` is really cool in a horse,” said Tebow, who in the fall will attend Texas A&M University, studying biomedical sciences and competing on the equestrian team. “I've heard the great ones have the most personality and so you've kind of got to learn how to deal with that. We were constantly trying to outthink him, but I've just had to learn that you have to let Vinny do his thing and you're kind of along for the ride.”

A year ago during the Ford Youth World they “got on the same page” and that resulted in them making the 2015 finals of the ranch riding. They began to find success together.

“The ranch riding class was developed to showcase the ranching heritage of the American Quarter Horse,” said Sarah Davisson of the AQHA. “It includes different maneuvers a horse would use on a ranch on any given day. They have to do a certain pattern in the arena and be scored on the different elements of that pattern.”

This week, Tebow and Vinny again qualified for the ranch riding finals and finished on top with the world championship in ranch riding.

However, she points out that success in the arena is just one part of this special team.

“Now when I ride other horses it makes me appreciate him for all the things that he has taught me,” she said.

Tebow will take those lessons learned with her to Texas A&M where she will compete on the equestrian team.

Davisson of the AQHA, said Tebow, “definitely embodies a great youth.” This summer, the Oklahoma teen was with Team USA for the American Quarter Horse Youth World Cup in Australia.

“Not only does she show and compete on the world level,” Davisson said, “her leadership skills are amazing. She’s also a great role model to the youth coming up in the Association.”

Sometimes that is conveyed verbally and other times through actions.

Take for example, Tebow’s reaction a couple of minutes after the ranch riding prelimins as their score was announced. Still horseback, Tebow, with tears welling in her eyes, leaned forward in the saddle, hugged Vinny’s neck with both arms then patted his neck with her right hand.

“It was just like more a sigh of relief that, ‘OK I did you right, I didn’t’ get in your way, I didn’t let you down,’” she said. “I really wanted that for Vinny.”

Partners helping make the Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show possible are Ford, Bank of America, B&W Trailer Hitches, Farnam, John Deere, Justin Boots, Markel, Merial, Montana Silversmiths, Nutrena, Professional’s Choice, Cripple Creek, SmartPak and Wrangler, along with event sponsors, including Noble Outfitters, Metro Golf Cars, Oklahoma State Fair Park, Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Four Sixes Ranch.

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Photo caption: Ann Elizabeth Tebow of Piedmont is shown with her American Quarter Horse Vinny at the Built Ford Tough AQHYA World Championship Show at State Fair Park.