

Champion

OF CHAMPIONS

By Megan Larson



With 175 points and five world championships, Alisa Bernhard and Fleetstreet Max won the All-Around Amateur and Classic All-Around Amateur awards.

Alisa Bernhard and Fleetstreet Max reach the top with All-Around Amateur and Classic Amateur titles—and most world championships for a single horse.

The 2008 World Show will certainly be a topic worth mentioning in years to come for many exhibitors, but for one woman the show was particularly momentous. With 175 points, Alisa Bernhard and her 1997 sorrel overo gelding Fleetstreet Max took the All-Around Amateur and All-Around Classic Amateur titles at the World Championship Paint Horse Show in Fort Worth, Texas. The supercharged duo from Germantown, Wisconsin, not only beat the single horse lifetime APHA world championship record, but they shattered it by two.

Bernhard started the World Show with a bang by winning a world championship in Classic Amateur Trail. The following day she placed third in Classic Amateur Western Horsemanship and third in Senior Trail, but was then given the distressing news that her grandmother had passed away.

“I didn’t know if I was going to have to go home for a funeral or what, so that put a damper on everything,” said Bernhard.

Her family postponed the memorial until after the World Show, allowing Bernhard and “Max” the opportunity to finish out the week and attempt to break the record for most world championship titles won by a single horse, previously held by Too Sexy Formyspot. The team continued their whirlwind success by placing eighth in Senior Hunter Hack, sixth in Senior Western Riding and eighth in Senior Hunter Under Saddle. They also made the finals in Senior Western Pleasure.

With so many successful moments in her riding career, Bernhard says she will never forget her very first APHA world championship, won at age 17, because it was a turning point in her life. Nor will she forget her first big win as a Youth competitor.

“When I was 8, I took my Quarter Horse to a 4-H show and I won a really big—in my mind—jumping class,” said Bernhard. “It was my first big win, and I was the youngest kid there. When I look back at pictures, I was so little! I still have the ribbon.”

At this year’s World Show, Bernhard continued her championship run and successfully tied the APHA world championships record by winning Amateur Hunter Hack. She then surpassed it with her Classic Amateur Hunt-Seat Equitation win. Bernhard says that was definitely a World Show moment she will remember, as it was her goal this year to break the record. She also knew the all-around awards weren’t far away.

“I first realized I might win the all-around awards with [hunt-seat] equitation over fences,” said Bernhard. “I knew Casey Hicks had a pretty good lead, and I thought if I could do well in the class, I could possibly pass him. And I still had three more classes after that.”

By setting her mind to it, Bernhard did just that and won a world championship in Amateur Hunt-Seat Equitation Over Fences, putting Max at 21 world championship titles—two above the previous record. Victory was even sweeter in the class, she says, because last year Max stopped at a fence during the finals, preventing them from placing. She simply hoped Max would make up for last year’s less-than-stellar performance and that they would do well in the class, but didn’t expect a world championship.

“I was pretty excited,” said Bernhard. “That was my first win after breaking the world championship record, so now I’m ahead by two!”

“I want to thank David Miller,” Bernhard continued. “He schooled me through some classes. I also want to thank my farrier, Dean. He’s been really great and doesn’t get much credit because he lives far away from here, but he’s really done a lot for Max.”

Now that the World Show is over, Bernhard looks to the future and considers her plans for next year’s event.

“I would really like for this year to be my last Amateur year at the World Show with Max, so I don’t have any specific plans for next year,” said Bernhard. “I’m never going to sell him. I eventually want to turn pro, but I don’t think I’m going to show him in Amateur anymore. But Max isn’t done. He’s not retired.”

Bernhard says she’s undecided about whether she will show a different horse, but one thing she is sure about is taking the next step and becoming a professional trainer.

For winning the 2008 All-Around Amateur and Classic Amateur awards, Bernhard received a three-horse aluminum trailer, courtesy of Hart trailers; \$1,000 in cash, courtesy of APHA; a pair of boots, courtesy of Lucchese; a trophy buckle, courtesy of Gist Silversmiths; and a monogrammed traveling chair, courtesy of the Paint Horse Journal.



A world championship in Classic Amateur Hunt-Seat Equitation helped Bernhard and Fleetstreet Max shatter the record for most world championship titles earned by a single horse.

2 WINNING WAYS

Rider/Horse: Alisa Bernhard and Fleetstreet Max, a 1997 sorrel overo gelding
Lineage: Sired by Fleet Machine and out of Cash Bar Maiden AQHA
Owner: Alisa Bernhard of Germantown, Wisconsin
World Show results: world champion in Amateur Hunter Hack, Working Hunter and eEquitation Over Fences, Classic Amateur Trail and Hunt-Seat Equitation; third in Classic Amateur Horsemanship and Senior Trail; fifth in Classic Amateur Western Riding; sixth in Classic Amateur Showmanship and Senior Western Riding; eighth in Classic Amateur Senior Hunter Under Saddle and Senior Hunter Hack; and finalist in Classic Amateur Senior Western Pleasure.