



Ichis My Choice and Grant Setnicka set the bar high as the first pair out in the Derby Open finals, and their score of 225 proved unbeatable.

# Nothing Left to Chance

Everything came together for Ichis My Choice and Grant Setnicka during the Derby Open finals at the Breeder's Invitational.

By Alex Lynch • Action photos by Dawn Baxstrom

**After just missing** the top spot in the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Super Stakes Open finals, Ichis My Choice and Grant Setnicka stepped up their game to win the Breeder's Invitational (BI) Derby Open in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

As the first draw in the 27-horse finals, Setnicka, an **Equi-Stat Elite \$1 Million Rider**, knew he would need to leave it all out in the pen to earn marks that would hold. He walked Ichis My Choice to the herd with

intention and threw down a smoking run that scored a 225. While a few other combinations came close, Ichis My Choice and Setnicka's score out of the gate was the eventual winner. The Championship was worth a hefty \$58,766 paycheck, which pushed the mare's lifetime **Equi-Stat** record to more than \$175,000.

"I knew I had to have a really, really good run being first," Setnicka said. "I wasn't crazy about my draw, but I felt like I was lucky

because I think the first set of cattle was a little bit better than the second set. I wasn't leaving anything to chance. The first few moves, she just felt a little wild and reactive. Once I got a chance to really start using her, I think she settled in. Luckily, I cut some cows that really let her run and stop.

"Then I got to just sit there and bite my nails for the next three hours. Any one of those horses could have won it. Any way I looked at it though, I had a good check and a



Despite facing several obstacles, Kyle Manion and his homebred mare Miss Meow worked their way to the Derby Non-Pro Championship.

good run, so I was happy.”

Ichis My Choice's owner, Constance Jaeggi, of J Five Horse Ranch LLC, also competed on the mare in the Derby Non-Pro finals, but it didn't slow her down a bit.

“She had a lot of runs,” Setnicka said. “I didn't really know how it was going to affect her, but it didn't seem to affect her at all. Everything just really came together for us. I want to thank Matt Miller, T.J. Good, Lloyd Cox, and Constance and Chubby [Turner] for giving me an opportunity to ride this horse.”

Jaeggi was thrilled that her mare, who was picked for purchase by Turner, finally got her time in the spotlight.

“It has been a huge honor. After we bought her we sent her to Grant, and he has just done a phenomenal job with her. She has been in all of the finals, and we couldn't ask for a better program for her to be in,” Jaeggi said of Ichis My Choice, who was also an Open finalist at the NCHA Futurity and Arbuckle Mountain Futurity, and was the Derby Open Co-Reserve Champion at The Cattlemen's, in addition to her NCHA Super Stakes Reserve finish. “This is so big for us, and it is really exciting. She really deserved a first place, and I wanted her to get that recognition. We are proud of her and proud of Grant. I trust him with that horse. It turned out great.”

### Derby Non-Pro

It can be tough for anyone to come out with a win at an event as competitive as the BI, but add personal sickness and the illness of a loved one to that, and the task can seem impossible. Despite having the cards stacked against him, Kyle Manion defied the odds and pulled through in the Derby Non-Pro on his mare Miss Meow.

After competing in the first-go round of the Derby Non-Pro, Manion came down with a pancreatic-related illness and was hospitalized for two days. While he was weak, he was motivated to earn a check for his son, Layne Thomas William Manion, who was born prematurely and in a neonatal intensive-care unit at the time of the show. He mustered up the strength to return to the BI for the second go-round and the finals, and it paid off for him in a big way.

“I had talked to the doctor, and they gave me a shot to come show,” Manion said. “They were hesitant, but I was able to check out. With an opportunity to show a great mare like this, and an opportunity to win some money for my wife [Havey Manion] and our child, I needed to step up and toughen up and endure whatever I needed to. This is too good of an opportunity not to take it.”

Manion was thrilled about garnering a check worth \$27,308, but what made the win

### BREEDER'S INVITATIONAL HISTORY

Year	Entries	Added	Total Purse
2003	712	\$500,000	\$1,431,638
2004	552	\$500,000	\$1,163,184
2005	784	\$582,500	\$1,357,113
2006	936	\$724,000	\$1,653,787
2007	760	\$596,250	\$1,412,539
2008	670	\$500,000	\$1,335,700
2009	1,020	\$540,000	\$1,737,990
2010	989	\$690,000	\$1,725,585
2012	1,527	\$1,142,000	\$2,769,100
2013	1,207	\$613,600	\$1,810,132
2014	1,049	\$555,000	\$1,609,677
2015	1,094	\$581,000	\$1,717,900
<b>2016</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>\$650,000</b>	<b>\$1,469,590</b>

even sweeter was the fact that the victory was on a homebred mare who is a full sister to his family's stallion Smooth As A Cat.

“Having her be a full sister to Smooth As A Cat and then to have a Smooth As A Cat gelding in the Reserve spot has made it a good day for the family,” Manion said. “To have homebred family horses do well really means a lot. Lloyd Cox has done such a great job with this mare. He has taken this mare to a great level. This is only the second time I have ever shown her, so she was basically packing me around.”

Manion knows his success at the BI would not have been possible without all of the help from Cox, who he said really helped pull everything together when he was distracted.

“With everything that has been going on with our son being ill, and me having to be away from my wife and son, and my head being in other places, I really have to give a lot of credit to my help,” he said. “It is hard enough to show a horse and do well when your mind is just a little off. I have to give a great deal of acknowledgement and gratitude to my help – Lloyd Cox, Adan Banuelos, Phil Rapp and Michael Cooper. When they help you, they are on your team, and they want to see you do well. They knew that I was preoccupied, and they took care of me.”

Along with the steadfast support in the cutting pen, Manion and his family have received an outpouring of love and prayers for Layne's quick recovery. Manion expressed that they have been incredibly humbled and thankful for all of the care and kind words.