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Winning Style

Non Pro Kailey King-Hale and Gotta Have Style take an EMO Circuit title in 'Vegas'

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Winning with Style

Kailey King-Hale and Gotta Have Style are finding their groove quickly after uniting

BY HORSETRADER STAFF

After a year, it's safe to say Kailey King-Hale and Gotta Have Style, the grey mare she acquired last year, are connecting.

Kailey, a non pro who rides at her family's King Performance Horses in Chino Hills, was looking for a next-level reiner to develop in spring 2023 when a friend at the Cactus Reining Classic in Scottsdale arranged an unforgettable test ride in a busy warm-up arena at the show.

"It was a crazy warm-up pen, and the trainer didn't even have time to ride her yet – he just said, 'go ahead and get on her!'," says Kailey, who nodded and proceeded into the busy arena. "You have all those crazy reiners, you know, running big fast circles right around her. And, you know, stopping hard, turning hard – and she just didn't care.

"It just kind of showcased her mind – that she could handle the big time stuff."

A year later, Kailey and "Bridget", by Spooks Gotta Whiz out of a Shiners Voodoo Dr daughter named Voodoo Gundam Style, have progressed with some nice wins – Top 10 at last fall's Best of the West, a Derby title at the California Reining Horse Association Challenge, and in March a Top 5 and Run For A Million qualification at the Cactus Classic. The duo's latest big win came at last month's EMO Celebration at South Point in Las Vegas, where they took the Amateur Circuit Championship and third place in the overall Junior Horse Division. They also won the 5-under Futurity in Ranch Horse – a late entry to an event that they had not practiced.

How does a non pro prepare a horse to suddenly show up – and



Courtesy photo

Kailey King-Hale and Gotta Have Style qualified for this month's Run For A Million at the Cactus Classic in March.

show well – in an unfamiliar class?

"Honestly, I think it was a little bit of luck," Kailey smiles. "That's just how winning goes – you always have to have a little bit of luck."

The momentum had been building for their entry in this month's Run For A Million, Aug. 12-17 at

South Point, when a different type of luck hit. An injury in a barn accident – not to the mare but to Kailey's ring finger – required orbital fracture surgery in late July. She has until Aug. 8 to decide if the arm-length cast is enough of an obstacle to postpone her Run For A Million ambitions until 2025. "I learned a long time ago from a big blow when I was 23 – my horse, Little Ilean, was qualified for the AQHA World Championship Show in reining and ranch horse and a week before the World, she bowed a back tendon," Kailey says. "I was devastated.

"I think that experience has kept me a little bit more grounded – not to say I'm not disappointed or I haven't cried," she adds. "I mean, gosh, as soon as the surgeon told me that I need surgery, I was just devastated for a couple minutes, you know. Then you kind of get a grip and, you know, we'll see if I can do it."

Whether or not Kailey heals in time for the Run For A Million, she and her grey mare will be connected and back in the arena this fall.

"As soon as the surgeon told me that I need surgery, I was just devastated."

- Kailey King-Hale



Courtesy photo