



Courtesy photo

Collegiate equestrian Sabrina Smith and Beebe at last year's SHOT World Championship Show.



Courtesy photo

Sabrina and dad, trainer Tony Smith, agree that her foundation in groundwork has made the difference.



Courtesy photo

Growing up, Sabrina was often in the ribbons in local show arenas.

Well-grounded

A solid foundation in ground work started Sabrina Smith's college ride

BY HORSETRADER STAFF

RAMONA – Gainesville, Texas, is about 1,400 miles from Sabrina Smith's growing grounds in Ramona, but she is right at home.

The 21-year-old sophomore competes on the North Central Texas College equestrian team, working toward a degree in criminal justice on a full-ride scholarship she earned from the ground up.

The daughter of Ramona-based trainer Tony Smith, Sabrina credits the versatility of her riding experiences for her selection to the NCTC equestrian team. Trail. Western. English. Ranch. Reining. Working cow. Versatility with a capital "V".

And both she and her dad credit her early foundation in showmanship and horsemanship for a seemingly natural connection across different disciplines.

"The details of showmanship are interesting, but I think that a lot of people find that stuff boring," says Sabrina, who first competed in a leadline class at age 1 – just a yearling! "My dad kept me away from rodeo and all the fun stuff with horses – I didn't even know that rodeo was a thing until I was probably 10 years old. But he wanted me to learn proper horsemanship before I got to go and have fun. And he did that to keep me safe."

Sabrina's dad regarded her jour-

ney as a marathon, not a sprint.

"It was very important to me that she learned slow and correct," says Tony, a onetime assistant to Lou Roper. "Starting the kid off with the boring stuff is always, I think, better because they don't know what's boring. So she was showing showmanship, and she didn't know that showmanship was boring. I kept her away from the fast stuff."

"I don't really see how people can truly get bored with horses, because there's always something to work on or something the better," says Sabrina. "There's just so many different things that you could do with horses."

Between those formative years and today's college competitions, there has been plenty of fast stuff – and slow stuff -- to learn from. Sabrina's route to college was sparked mostly by her passion and skill with horses, winning a room full of ribbons, buckles and awards at local shows where her father would take his clients. But she also applied herself in the FFA program in high school and was awarded the American FFA Degree, the highest national honor in FFA.

"My dreams as a kid were to show big because I'd always been doing just local things, and I felt I had the talent to go bigger," says Sabrina. "And the college that I go to, North Central Texas College,

"Deep down inside, I really have a love for trails, for competitive trail riding ... it's all about the details."

- Sabrina Smith

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Courtesy photo

She credits trainer Roy Rich for expanding her performance horse side.

gave me the major opportunity to go to world level shows. It's really given me the opportunity to go and shine at the level that I felt I was ready to compete in."

As a freshman rider last year, she captured three Top 10s at the National Intercollegiate Ranch and Stock Horse Association National Championship Show in Amarillo, competing in Western riding ranch versatility -- cow work, reining, ranch pleasure and ranch trail. Her highlight came at the Stock Horse Of Texas World Championship Show, where she took a pair of Top 10s including a Reserve Championship in Ranch Trail.

When Sabrina was emerging from high school, she and her dad sought help building skills that she had not developed through her young riding career -- but would need in the Texas stock horse uni-

verse. She went to The Rich Group in Temecula to work cattle with Roy Rich.

"I had to learn angles and how to drive," she says. "Roy really taught me how to drive the cow with the angles and how to get one to stop. And they also taught me the basics of reining -- I'd never been on a horse that did actual sliding stops before I went to Roy's. I learned how to sit that correctly."

Being on horses that already knew their jobs -- horses that could teach her -- was nice, too. One of those nice horses went with her to Gainesville: She acquired a 12-year old red dun mare she calls "Beebe" through The Rich Group.

Her journey continues as her sophomore year with Beebe approaches, and as excited as she is to look ahead, she recognizes her well-grounded past has played a role.



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Versatility helped earn Sabrina a full equestrian scholarship

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