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There's No Impersonating The Duke

Latricia Duke Rides Runnin Ricochet Bar
To LG Pro Classic Cash

2009
LG PRO
CLASSIC

COUSHATTA

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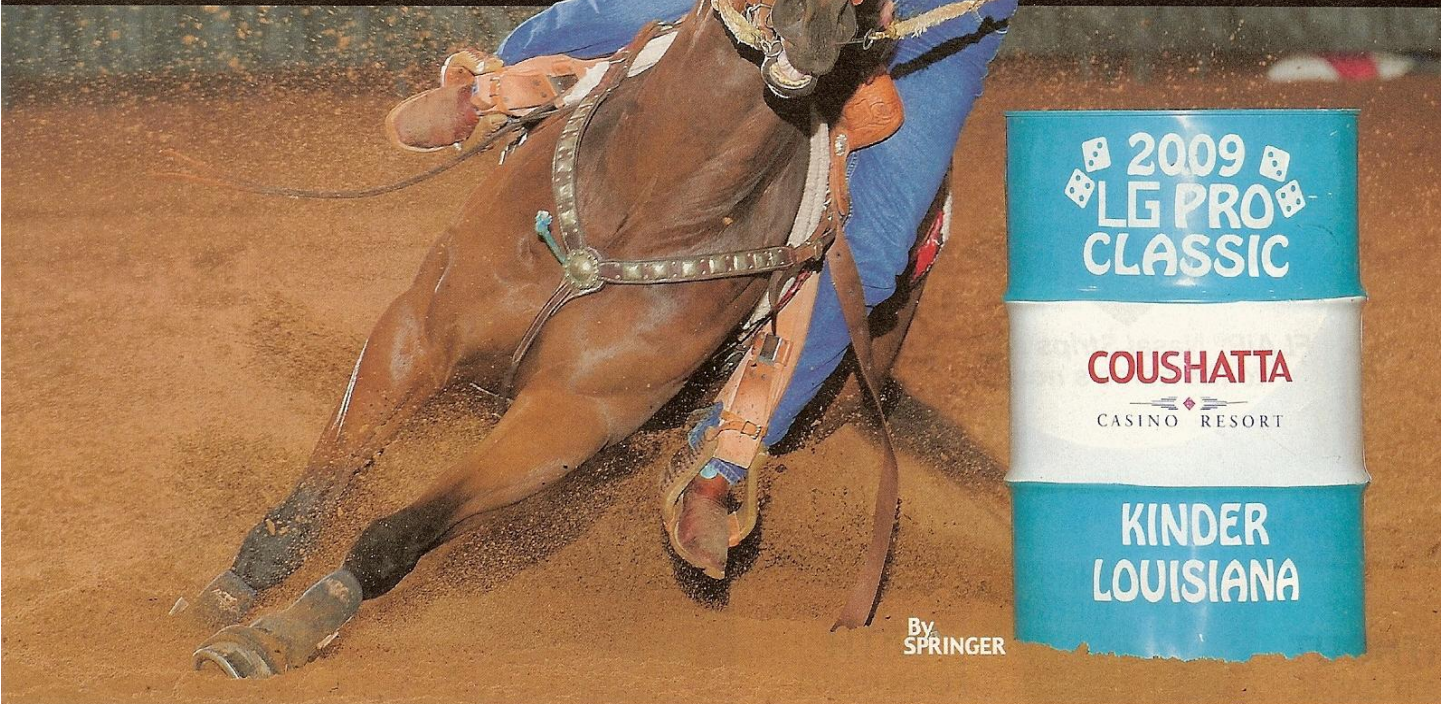
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LANCE GRAVES PRO CLASSIC

GRAND SLAM FOR DUKE AT LG PRO CLASSIC



By
SPRINGER

If barrel racer LaTricia Duke intends to quit while she's at the top of her barrel racing game, she needs to do it now. Dollar-wise, it gets no better in the sport than winning \$133,318 at a single four-day event. Before she hangs up her spurs, she needs to get two small Chamber of Commerce groups from Anson, Texas, where she lives, and Kinder, La., where she won her big-time bucks, to fork over some bonus money for putting their tiny cities on the map.

LaTricia Duke was the best barrel racing bet at the third annual Lance Graves Pro Classic held Feb. 19-22 at the Coushatta Casino Resort in Kinder, La. article and photographs by Kenneth Springer

Duke's phenomenal windfall came at the third annual Lance Graves Pro Classic held Feb. 19-22 at the indoor facility on the grounds

of the Coushatta Casino Resort in Kinder, La. Throughout the four days of competition, Duke had the Midas touch. Everything she touched

turned into a paycheck. Even though 82 percent of her winnings (\$110,262) came from the 50-horse Invitational Futurity Slot Race, she still would have left with a chunk of cash totaling \$13,912 from the Barrel Futurities of America approved Futurity and the National Barrel Horse Association 4D Open Super Show had there been no slot race.

Despite what some experts have described as the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression, the third annual Lance Graves Pro Classic lived up to its name in every sense of the word. Entries were the highest ever, there was not a single stall left unused, every camper hookup was taken and the total payoff reached a record \$316,793.

"We couldn't be happier," said show manager and promoter Ryan Dohrn, of Beech Island, S.C. "In this economy, we never expected such a great turn out. Not only was it successful in that respect, but it was tough competition.

"As Lance and I saw more and more futurities going away, we became concerned and wanted to have a great futurity event that offered more than just around the clock barrel racing," he said. "That's why we came to Kinder, with their resort type environment, where people would not only have a great opportunity to run their horses for good money, but have a great time as well."

Belle of the Ball

Nothing short of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet can show the phenomenal accomplishment of small-town, west Texas barrel racer LaTricia Duke, who toured the cloverleaf course 14 times on five horses over a short four-day period to win \$133,318. Here's how she did it—Running Ricochet Bar, \$110,262; Heza Bug Leo, \$19,298; Letta Lash Do It, \$2,250; Famous Aunt Wandy, \$887 and Casino Bambino, \$618.

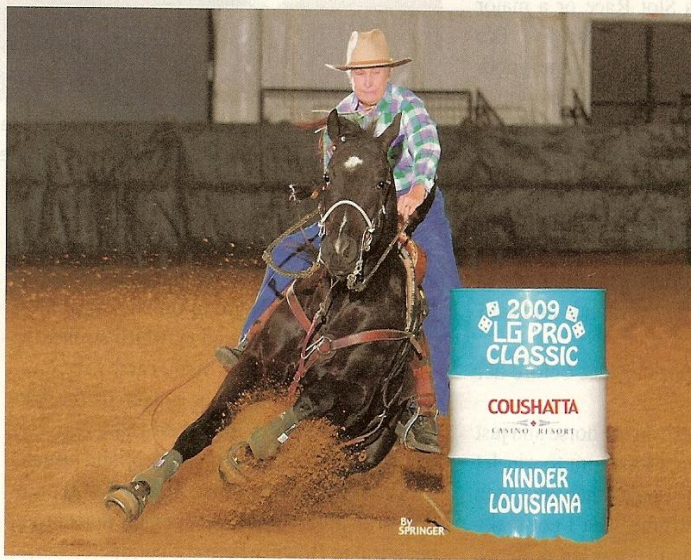
The consistency of Duke and her horses was further showcased by two of her horses placing in every payoff. Both Running Ricochet Bar, owned by Thomas Souza, and Heza Bug Leo, owned by Arbie and Betty Miller, cashed checks in both rounds of the Invitational Slot Race, placed in both go rounds of the BFA Futurity, finished first and second in the average, and won one division of the NBHA Super Show.

Star of the Show

Thanks to the live web cast provided by barrelhorses.com, Thomas Souza, of Sao Paulo, Brazil, was able to watch his 4-year-old bay gelding, Running Ricochet Bar, win the head-



LaTricia Duke and Runnin Ricochet Bar cleaned house at the 3rd Annual Lance Graves Pro Classic, winning the Invitational Slot Race, the BFA Futurity and the second go of the NBHA Super Show for checks totaling \$110,262.



Beth Ogle, of Kinta, Okla., clocked the second fastest time of the entire Lance Graves Pro Classic on this run of 14.295 aboard Stoli With A Twist in the Invitational Slot Race qualifying round. The time earned her \$5,000 and advanced her to the Slot Race Short Go.

line Lance Graves Invitational Slot Race and a \$100,000 paycheck.

The heart stopping event featured Duke jockeying his gelding to a time of 14.397 to edge ahead of two 14.444's posted by Jolene Stewart on Return Of The Bully and Kelly Yates on Go Figure Fiesta. Their slice of the pie came to \$22,500 each. Duke came back for another serving of cash earning \$15,000 for

fourth aboard Heza Bug Leo. Talmadge Green partnered with Bogie Webb's BA Famous Zena to clock a 14.517 for a fifth place \$10,000 return on his \$5,000 entry fee.

Souza saw his bay gelding fire off four consistent runs throughout the competition that no other horse was able to match. A 14.373 in the qualifying round of the Slot Race, worth third place and \$3,400, started it all off on

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Thursday night. A 14.631 in the first go of the BFA Futurity on Friday morning was worth \$1,236. Then came the all-important Saturday night Slot Race Finals, where a 14.397 earned \$100,000.

The final outing for the bay superstar was the second go of the BFA Futurity on Sunday morning, where he clocked his fastest time of the weekend of 14.299 for the first place futurity check of \$1,855. The run carried a substantial bonus. It enabled Duke and Running Ricochet Bar to win the average by over four-tenths of a second for \$2,474. Duke also paid her entry fee in Race No. 2 of the NBHA Super Show and rolled over her time. It was a good gamble worth the first place 1D check of \$1,296 against a field of 336 Open horses.

"It was just his weekend," said an always humble, pleasant and personable Duke. "He just felt really solid on every run and didn't get uptight about anything. On most of his runs, I didn't think we would be as fast as we were, but he was just striding out. In the qualifying round of the Slot Race, I didn't push him for all he had coming home because all I wanted to do was make the Finals. In the Finals, I didn't really go in to win it. I wanted to be smooth and let Ricochet do his job."

Having never won a Slot Race or a major barrel racing futurity prior to the LG Pro Classic, Duke has learned to accept some good-natured kidding about never being the bride.

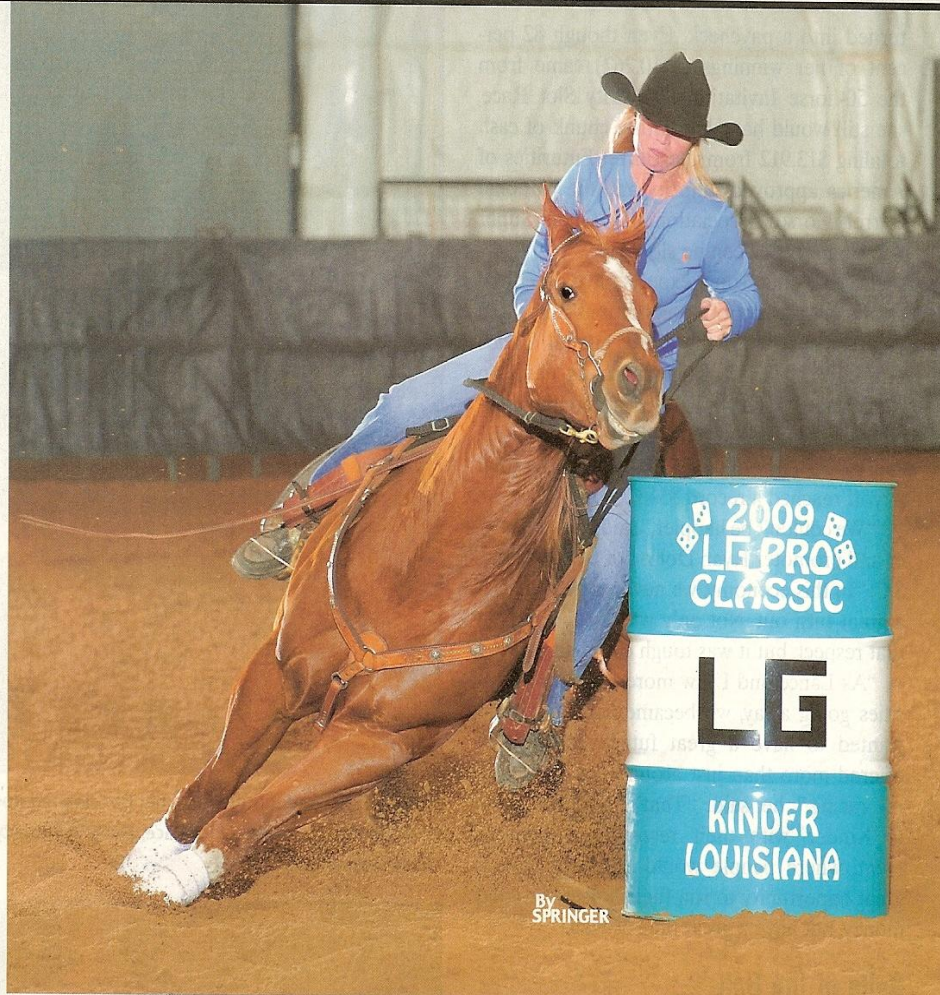
"I've won a couple of smaller futurities, but never anything like this," Duke said. "I've been second at Oklahoma City and second at Fort Smith. I've been second in a slot race, third two different times and fourth once. I've placed a bunch, but never come out first. A couple of people yelled at me from the stands and said, 'you're the bride finally.'"

But Duke found a special peace before her run at Kinder.

"I was sitting back there on my horse and just thought, 'well, God, when it's my turn to win, let it be. If it's tonight or if it's some other time, then it will just be some other time.' But I got really relaxed and calm, and I think it was His presence that calmed me down before I ran."

Prior to competing at the Lance Graves Pro Classic, Duke estimated she had won over \$7,000 on the talented gelding, and being a smart trainer and rider, she's learned some things not to do on Ricochet.

"I won second in the first round of the Juvenile at Oklahoma City," she said. "I came back on my second run and tried to win the average and went a little too fast. I learned my



A check for \$10,000 went to Credit To Fiesta, ridden by Caryn Henry and owned by Rick Large, of Pierson, Fla., for winning the Invitational Slot Race Consolation.

lesson about how fast he can run on his own without me pressing him. I placed in the slot race at Starkville, and then went to the futurity at Murfreesboro. I only got to run him once there because he injured a tendon, which swelled up for a couple of days, and then I came here."

Duke became a major player in the barrel racing futurity game seven years ago. Her name quickly sprang to the top, and usually with more than one horse. It was her reputation as an up-and-coming superstar that earned her a trip to Brazil, where she conducted barrel racing clinics. It was there that she met Runnin Ricochet Bar's owner, Thomas Souza.

"Thomas told me about a colt that he had bought from Joyce Kernek that was by Runnerelse and out of a Rare Bar mare," Duke said. "He and Joyce work very closely together, and when I got back home, Joyce called me and asked if I wanted to ride this colt. I told her I did, so my husband, J.O., picked him up on his way back from the Heritage Sale in

October of 2007. I found very quickly that I had to be really careful with him because he was a shy kind of horse and very standoffish. He's a really feely kind of horse that you can't be rough with or jerk on."

Kernek already knew how a colt bred like Ricochet had to be handled. She also had carefully checked out Duke's style of training and riding before ever picking up the phone and offering the colt to her to ride and train. Kernek, the 1970 World Champion Barrel Racer in the Girls Rodeo Association, the forerunner to today's Women's Professional Rodeo Association, is a master horsewoman in every sense of the word. Over a decade ago she started conducting clinics in Brazil and formed lasting friendships with highly respected Brazilian horse owners, such as Souza.

"The Runnerelse horses cannot take abuse," Kernek said. "They will hurt you. If you give them an opportunity, they will work their hearts out for you, but if you ram, jam

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and spur them, they will leave town. They are as serious and sensitive as any bloodline I've ever ridden. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where to send him for his barrel racing training. I had sent him to Dave Stinson to break. He did all the early starting and had him about three months. He does a great job with the colts because he is easy with them and has great hands."

Kerneck and her husband, George, had a number of horse partnerships with Jeani and Matt Reiman, and Runnin Ricochet Bar was one of their best efforts.

"I wanted to breed Ricochet's mother, Slostartfastfinish, to their stud, Runnerelse, because he was by Magnolia Bar," Kerneck said. "One of the best barrel horses I ever trained and rode was a bay gelding named Solar Powered, who was by Magnolia Bar. I won a lot on him in the futurities, and then my daughter, Bobbie Jo, ran him and won a lot. So there was a lot of thought and planning that went into this colt. When we sold him to Thomas, we had originally hoped to keep him a stud and bring that bloodline into Brazil."

For the remainder of 2009, Ricochet will remain under the saddle of Duke and compete in all the major futurities in the United States.



Kelly Yates, of Pueblo, Colo., clocked the fastest time of the Lance Graves Pro Classic on her way to a win of the NBHA Super Show Race No. 1. Riding Flying High Firewater, Yates earned \$1,380, then backed it up with a third place in Race No. 2 for \$810.

IT IS JUST UNREAL. I'VE NEVER WON \$133,000 IN AN ENTIRE YEAR RUNNING BARRELS, AND I WON THAT MUCH IN ONE WEEKEND. IT'S LIKE A WONDERFUL DREAM.

—LATRICIA DUKE

After that, the gelding will finally get to see Brazilian soil and be stabled alongside Souza's other outstanding barrel horse, Victory Fly, considered to be one of the best stallions in Brazil.

As for Duke, she will continue on the steady path that led her to her recent windfall.

"I am so blessed to have so many people helping me," Duke said. "We moved last April from Merkel to Anson (two small west Texas towns only 20 miles apart) when Arbie and Betty Miller bought an indoor arena and so kindly offered to let us train out of it. My mom and dad are wonderful to literally move in when we are on the road and take care of the place and our 12-year-old son, Bravid. And since mid-November, I've had a wonderful helper in Cody Hornbuckle, who takes care of all the feeding, saddling, warming up and all that goes

with it, so that I can just climb on my horses and go. And no barrel racer can get along without their vet, and mine is Dr. Randy Lewis."

Married to J.O. Duke for 13 years, LaTricia admits she wouldn't attempt to do what she does without him.

"He starts all our colts, shoes horses and, most important to me, keeps me mentally stable and my horses ready," she said. "When I get strung out and go 'all girl' in my attitude, he brings me back to reality."

Duke was a last minute change on the Lance Graves Invitation Slot Race program.

"If it hadn't been for Clay Sewalt and Bo Hill, I would not have been able to run Ricochet," Duke said. "Bo sold the horse she was going to ride, and Clay had the slot. We were at Starkville when Bo called Clay and

told her that I had a bay horse that she thought she ought to let run in her slot. Clay was so encouraging and kind."

Even J.O. is having trouble convincing his wife that what she experienced at the Lance Graves Pro Classic is reality.

"It is just unreal," Duke said. "I've never won \$133,000 in an entire year running barrels, and I won that much in one weekend. It's like a wonderful dream."

Slot Race Consolation Champion

Duke wasn't the only barrel racer walking through the Coshatta Casino on Saturday night with a big smile. Caryn Henry, of Seville, Fla., had reason to smile when she nailed down a \$10,000 paycheck for winning the Slot Race Consolation Race with a 14.819, riding Credit To Fiesta. She and second-place finisher Dena Kirkpatrick, of Post, Texas, were the only two to clock sub-15 times in the Consolation bracket. Kirkpatrick clocked a 14.968 aboard JB One Famous Dude to earn \$5,000.

Royally bred, Credit To Fiesta is owned by Rick Large, of Pierson, Fla., who purchased the sorrel gelding at the 2008 Jud Little Sale in Ardmore, Okla. Sired by Cash Not Credit and out of famed National Finals Rodeo bar-