

Still the Queen

Five decades of tradition and hard work have made Lindy Burch's Oxbow Ranch one of the top five cutting breeders of all time.

By Hannah Harrel

There is no denying that Lindy Burch is a superstar in the cutting world, where she was the first woman to top the NCHA Futurity Open and is the only woman to win a National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA) Open World Championship.

The **Equi-Stat Elite \$4 Million Rider**, who was also the first woman president of the NCHA, balances her successful show career with a flourishing breeding business in Weatherford, Texas. Her Oxbow Ranch is currently ranked No. 5 in the **Equi-Stat Cutting Breeder Statistics** with \$6,790,022.

That impressive sum has been about 50 years in the making. After trail riding as a young child, Burch's climb to the top began at around age 14 in Chino, California.

"A cutting horse trainer had moved in across the road, which was convenient because I had just seen cutting for the first time and thought, 'Gosh, that's what I really want to do,'" Burch said.

While Burch enjoys training and showing, breeding was in her long-term plan all along.

"I had one particular mare called Jessie Sue. I was 18 or 19 when I got her and I was always going to breed her," Burch recalled of the 1971 mare (Martin's Jessie x Guthrie Susan x Hollywood Gold). "I got involved with Dan Lufkin, who owned the Oxbow Ranch up in Prairie City, Oregon, at the time and I started riding horses for him. I talked to him about the importance of great mares and strong female lines. He said, 'Name the best 10 mares in the world that you know of.' I named them and he bought nine of them. That's how the Oxbow broodmares originated."

Burch moved to Weatherford around 1998. When Lufkin got out of the business two years later, Burch bought his shares and established herself as the owner of Oxbow Ranch. Since then, she has continued to improve her broodmare band and breeding program.

According to **Equi-Stat**, Oxbow Ranch

has bred 230 money-earners, 17 of which have more than \$100,000 each in lifetime earnings. CR Sun Reys (Dual Rey x Play Peek A Boon x Freckles Playboy), owned by Center Ranch, tops that list with \$298,385 banked, followed by Dave Behnen's Im

Catman (High Brow Cat x Cowstruck x Smart Little Lena), who has amassed checks totaling \$288,209. With \$272,000 in lifetime earnings, 2011 NCHA Open World Champion Bet Hesa Gat (High Brow Cat x Bet Yer Blue Boons x Freckles Playboy) is the third-highest earner on Oxbow Ranch's breeder record.

The success of foals bred by Oxbow Ranch stems from Burch's strong belief in using top-quality mares.

"They have to have the conformation and they have to have the desire," Burch stated. "They have to stay sound, which goes back to good conformation. I try to take the best of both parents to make a little better individual."

Burch's long history with the horses she breeds and owns creates a strong attachment. She has worked with many generations of Oxbow Ranch's progeny, giving her an unmistakable connection with the program.

Bet Yer Blue Boons (Freckles Playboy x Royal Blue Boon x Boon Bar), who marked an astounding 233 at the NCHA Open World Finals in 1999, held the Open world record for more than a decade and carried Burch to the 2000 NCHA Open World Championship, has produced 17 money-earners who have garnered \$943,982.

Even though Burch has worked with many of "Bet's" offspring, Bet Shes Smooth (by Smooth As A Cat) has proven to be special. Last December, Burch rode the 2012



Bet Yer Blue Boons helped elevate Lindy Burch's Oxbow Ranch to No. 5 on the **Equi-Stat Cutting Breeder Statistics**.

mare to the NCHA Futurity Open Reserve Championship.

"That mare was probably the easiest mare of all of Bet's to train. The easiest meaning she's sweet. She loves people, she loves me, and she's always nuzzling me," Burch said. "She's real cowy; I don't really remember a bad days I ever had on that mare."

It is obvious that Burch's mares hold a special place in her heart. Their comfort is paramount throughout the breeding process. She believes treating her mares well helps preserve their longevity, and that is why Burch continues to produce quality offspring.

Burch works closely with Colorado State University's Dr. Elaine Carnevale, who specializes in oocyte procedures and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), to protect her mares' reproductive abilities.

"She's a woman, she's kind to them and she loves them, and they're her life. That's the only kind of people I want, or will allow, to work on my horses," Burch said.

Burch's commitment to the cutting industry has led to her success, but the Cowgirl Hall of Fame member does not let her long list of accolades cloud her genuine love for the sport.

"I really realize what a wonderful position I'm in. To get to ride these mares' progeny all so personal to me. I have such an investment in them, and I enjoy it." ★