



A TOP TEN VEST MEANS
THE WORLD TO

SHTX COLLEGIATE RIDER

BY AMY OLSON

Bryson Bassinger set his goal to win a Stock Horse of Texas top ten vest at the World show in 2022 and did just that. It was less than an easy road for the Texas cowboy though, and many wouldn't have made the sacrifices that he did.

Bassinger is a student at West Texas A&M University, where he studies animal science as well as taking range and ranch management courses when he can. Bryson originally began attending college on a track and field scholarship. He tried out for the ranch horse team in 2018, and was hooked.

"I grew up in Bolivar, Texas where my family ran red angus pairs. I knew how to sit on a horse and not fall off, and I could read a cow okay. But I never did much showing," Bassinger said.

In SHTX and other associations that host ranch horse versatility, competitors have to do ranch reining, cow work, ranch trail and ranch pleasure to receive all-around honors. Levels are dependent on the rider and horse, and they're divided by the cow work. Novice riders will box the cow, limited riders will box and drive their cow

and Non Pro riders must take their cow down the fence similar to the reined cow horse. One major difference in the Ranch Horse Versatility is that riders can circle their cow or rope it.

Bryson already knew how to rope but his horse DMR Manzanita Who, AKA JJ, wasn't very experienced in the show pen, so he started off as a novice. WTAMU is lucky to have a local supporter that lets the ranch horse team work his cattle for practice, most days, Bassinger could be found trying to improve his boxing skills. As the two grew, Bryson leveled up into the limited classes, a clear step towards going down the fence.

"I was so dang ready to go down the fence," Bassinger said. "I treated every box drive like it was a fence run."

Bryson's hard work was paying off in the eyes of his coach Dr. Lance Baker. Baker chose Bryson as the representative in the limited class to attend the NRCHA Celebration of Champions in February 2022 where he tied for 2nd place in the cow work. The team took 3rd overall.

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PERFORMANCE HORSE DIGEST

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"He's going to graduate this December, so he asked me at the beginning of the semester if he could go down the fence," Dr. Baker said.

As with any good coach, Dr. Baker tries to place his riders in the class where they will be the most successful, so he told Bryson to improve his pleasure and trail scores before taking the leap into the non-pro. Once JJ and Bryson were pulling high enough scores in every class, Baker allowed them to level up.

The team practices multiple days a week, but is not funded like other university sports teams, and the same can be said for collegiate ranch horse teams across the nation. Students are often asked to fundraise to pay for travel and entry fees.

"Everyone knows the struggle of a broke college kid, and it's even worse when you're addicted to horses," Bryson said.

While attending shows in an attempt to season his horse, Bassinger packed a bedroll and would sleep in the gooseneck of his trailer or the team's tack stall. By saving on a hotel room, Bryson said he could always make sure his horse had plenty of shavings and great feed.

All the time and comfort Bryson sacrificed paid off at the SHTX World Show.

In the first go, JJ and Bryson won trail, however the pair didn't place higher than sixth in their other classes. The second round was even tougher, and Bassinger was very concerned he hadn't done enough to meet his goal.



When all was said and done, Bryson Bassinger and DMR Manzanita Who took 10th overall and took home one of the coveted vests.

Dr. Baker said he was not aware if Bryson had taken the vest off a month after he'd won it.

Photos Courtesy of Bryson Bassinger
Bryson Bassinger and JJ at a RHAA show last summer.
WTAMU Ranch Horse team at the SHTX World Show and Derby.
Bryson and JJ also competed at a SRCHA show last January.



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