

Super Stakes

Open

It's Pepto Time

by Stacy Pigott

When One Time Pepto won the NCHA Super Stakes Open, it justified every penny of the \$380,000 owner Jeffrey Matthews had spent on the then yearling colt at the 2002 NCHA Futurity Select Sale. It also justified the confidence Matthews placed in trainer Matt Gaines, who has conditioned One Time Pepto from the start, even after undergoing hip replacement surgery in April 2004.

At 36 years old, Gaines doesn't fit the standard profile of a hip replacement patient. Years earlier he had been diagnosed with avascular necrosis, a disease resulting from a loss of blood supply to the bone. Without blood, the bone tissue dies and causes the bone to collapse. In

Gaines' case, the ball of his hip was affected as a result of a car crash when he was 15. Twenty years later, the pain had gotten so bad that Gaines knew he had to do something.

"I reached a point where I was either going to take a chance, get it done and be able to keep training, or I was going to have to quit. I just couldn't do it," said Gaines, who relied on Clint Allen, his assistant at the time, to work many of his horses while riding only a few himself. "The last year or so was a struggle. When I got up, I didn't want to come ride. When I was out here riding, I couldn't ride as long or do the things that I needed to do a lot of times. I didn't sleep at night, and stayed tired all of the time. It was just really dragging me down and affecting my work. I reached a decision that I needed to go in and get this done. If I can still train horses, fine. If not, I need to go find something else to do."

Gaines met with several doctors, most of whom told him he was too young for a hip replacement. While a hip replacement would allow Gaines to live a relatively normal life again, joint replacements do not last forever. There is a good chance Gaines will undergo the procedure again in his lifetime.

"I told (the doctor), I'm in the prime of my life, the prime of my career. If I do it now and I get 20 years out of it, I'll be 56 years old. At that time, I'm probably not going to be nearly as competitive as I am now," Gaines said, referring to Dr. Bill Hefley, of Little Rock, Arkansas, who performed Gaines' hip replacement surgery. "Twenty years from now if I have to do it again and quit riding, I can live with that."

Gaines, who was referred to Dr. Hefley by fellow cutter Wayne Long, had his hip replacement done shortly after the Super Stakes in 2004. By the time the Summer Spectacular rolled around, Gaines was back in the saddle. At the Suncoast Futurity in Las Vegas, Nevada last fall, Gaines tied with himself for the top spot in the 5/6-year-old Suncoast Open Classic/Challenge aboard Its Just About Me and Little Pepto Gal. Next stop—Fort Worth, Texas and the NCHA Futurity.

"Even in the fall, (my hip) was still bothering me. There were times that I thought well, maybe this is as good as it's going to get. But even though it was bothering me, it was still so much better than what it was. Looking back now, I'd do it all over again if I had to, in a heartbeat. It's made a huge difference in my life," said Gaines, who had the support of all of his clients as he recovered and returned to the cutting pen. One of those clients was Matthews, the owner of One Time Pepto.

"It was kind of a difficult year. This horse was good at Futurity, but I didn't feel that I had



This page: Matt Gaines marked 224 on Jeffrey Matthews' One Time Pepto to win the Super Stakes Open championship on April 17.

Opposite page: Paul Hansma and Rockin By Choice took the reserve title with a 223.5 for Elizabeth Queen.

him completely ready," said Gaines, who lost a cow aboard One Time Pepto just before the buzzer in the NCHA Futurity semi-finals. "Now, I feel that he's completely ready, and I've got to give a lot of thanks to Jeffrey for sticking with me through that. I told him I was going to have surgery and was going to be down for a while. He had a lot invested in that horse. He could have said he was going to take him somewhere else, but he stuck with me."

Heading into 2005, Gaines wasted no time in showcasing One Time Pepto's talents. The roan stallion finished third in both the Abilene Spectacular and The Bonanza, and made the finals at Augusta. At the Super Stakes, One Time Pepto truly began to shine.

"He's always had the talent, but just had some bad luck at the Futurity," Gaines said of the Peptoboonsmal stallion. "Over the last few shows, he's really put it together and gotten smart. He's just a phenomenal horse."

At the Super Stakes, One Time Pepto scored 219.5 points to finish fifth in the first go-round, then marked 220.5 points to tie for the combined lead going into the semi-finals. There, he scored 219 to split 2/3/4 before turning in a spectacular 224-point run in the finals. The very next horse in the arena was Rockin By Choice, who marked 223.5 points under Paul Hansma to take the reserve championship for owner Elizabeth Queen.

"The second cow was pretty tough, but that cow made the run," Gaines recalled. "When I got done, I was a little scared because I left the door open enough, and I thought Paul (Hansma) had a dang good run. I thought he might have had me. It was close."

One-half point is close, but it was enough to give One Time Pepto his first major championship. The stallion has now earned \$155,969 in NCHA competition, but more importantly, has shown Matthews that his sale instincts were correct.

"We all knew that horse had the potential. But a lot of horses don't ever get to show it—they get hurt or things happen, as you saw tonight. A lot of good horses went out, and there were a lot of horses capable of winning too," said Matthews, of Warsaw, North Carolina. "I'm proud of my horse. It's been a long time coming."

Matthews won the Super Stakes Classic Limited Non-Pro last year, and was this year's reserve champion in the Super Stakes Limited Non-Pro aboard Reymanising. He now has a top Open horse in One Time Pepto, whose success he never takes for granted.

"I just knew he had it in him," said Matthews, who has suffered a run of bad luck with his horses, including EPM and accidents that have ended the careers of several show horses. "It wasn't just Matt and me; a lot of people worked on this horse. Everybody says he's special. This is a hard business. It worked out, and I'm so blessed."

Rockin By Choice ended a phenomenal Super Stakes show with his Open reserve championship. Under Paul Hansma, Rockin By Choice also won the Open Gelding Stakes.

"I wish I would have found a better third cow. That would have made a lot of difference," Hansma said of his Open finals run. "When I went down there, I had the yellow cow that I cut first and the black cow that I cut

Mr San Peppy 1968	Leo San 1949
Peppy San Badger 1974	Peppy Belle 1955
Sugar Badger 1959	Grey Badger III 1947
Peptoboonsmal 1992	Sugar Townley 1943
Boon Bar 1972	Doc Bar 1956
Royal Blue Boon 1980	Teresa Tivio 1954
Royal Tincie 1965	Royal King 1943
One Time Pepto s. 2001	Texas Dottie 1962
Doc O'Lena 1967	Doc Bar 1956
Smart Little Lena 1979	Poco Lena 1949
Smart Peppy 1966	Peppy San 1959
One Time Soon 1989	Royal Smart 1958
Jose Uno 1960	Joe's Last 1948
Uno Princess 1965	Shov Zan 1950
Hanna's Princess 1950	El Rey H 1935
	Miss Freckles 1941

second. I didn't know what to cut third. I knew the black strip acted good on Matt's run, so I just went for it, and it wasn't as good. It cost me. But the horse was great."

Hansma started training Rockin By Choice after Skip and Elizabeth Queen bought the colt for \$35,000 at the NCHA Futurity Sale.

"Paul came out to work some of our other horses—I think we were getting ready to go to Abilene. Skip said, 'How about working this 2-year-old we just bought?' Paul got on him and it was like magic from the beginning," said Elizabeth Queen. "He loved him. We knew that it would work." ★



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