



ABHA
AUSTRALIAN BARREL HORSE ASSOCIATION

NEWS

ABHA finals fever is coming in hot in 2024 with a jam packed program, ensuring four spectacular days of competition. A record breaking 511 Open Divisional entries have rolled through to our new entries system, in a year that has measured an unbelievable growth in our membership base and a packed calendar of affiliate events nationally.

A tightening of the program this year has meant some big changes to the program but one thing is for sure we are guaranteed to project the horse power in the Fast Fifty, with the same due care and attention to the AELEC ground as last year. One of the main changes adopted is the exclusion of the exhibitions, in 2024 exhibitions have been limited to just our younger, rising Futurity Star to afford them the time to take a look around the class room. From the time we crack the gate open for the first competitor it will be all business and competitors will be running against the clock.

FINALS EDITION

The livestreaming is once again included and is now a prerequisite of our finals, ensuring that those family and friends and barrel racing enthusiasts, can tune in to watch the action.

As the cream of the pot rise up our Fast Fifty in 24 in prime time, our streaming metrics peak as the live stream audience engage join us for the fast paced action. So too will our live web cast showcase seventy-five of our rising futurity horses who will battle it out over two rounds. We have double the nominations in this event and it is bound to be even more sensational than last year. The inclusion of a 2D futurity competition has attracted a bigger field and we are sure to see an electrifying expose of talent and breeding.

Again we acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Justin Gill for spotlighting our breeders and competitors who are eligible for the Stallion Incentive. This is our third year of incorporating the Stallion Incentive into the ABHA finals. Justin was the leading force behind the introduction of the incentive purse in Australia and has been a welcomed addition to the competition, so much so that the Australian Barrel Horse have

been fielding calls from other associations and events wanting to know more! Monies from our stallion service fee auctions plus the stallions paid in fees, result in a 10% ABHA retention, and the remaining 90% purse is spread across the Futurity, Maturity and Open competition at 30% for each of these events. At the time the newsletter went to print, we had a culmination of \$37,694.42 to be paid out without the inclusion of the rider nomination fees which also are directed back to the pot. To win an incentive pay out you do not necessarily have to win a division, it is paid to the highest placing paid in horse (by an incentive stallion) rider and the sire owner of each division and the highest placing paid in stallion and rider in the Futurity (1st & 2nd place to paid in riders and stallion owners) & Maturity (pays 1st -4th place for paid in riders and stallion owners).

It is an exciting time to be involved in barrel racing in Australia right now, this can be attributed to several factors and the hype of our finals is gaining momentum. The board join in wishing you all the best of luck over the four days of competition and safe travels to the ABHA 2024 Finals.

Happy Barrel Racing!

It is the perfect time to reflect on the future of our sport and our winning line up from our Junior 2023 Divisional champions. Their experiences and their road to Tamworth finals are featured in this edition, with some insight into their thoughts.

Paisley Murphy



Little Drummer 2023 Winner!
 Paisley Murphy & MCV Star Cat
Horse's Stable Name: Nacho
How old are you? 10
What colour is your horse? And how long have you had him? Chestnut with a 10 on his bum. He was mums best work horse, he loves mustering and working cattle but my Mum lets me Barrel Race and Campdraft on him, so his mostly my horse now.
How long have you been barrel racing? About 2 years
How many ABHA Finals have you been to? 2 and my first canter on Nacho was at the 2022 finals and then I won a buckle in 2023 in my last year of little drum runners
What is your favourite thing about your horse? That he keeps me safe and he loves me and he is really cool
How excited were you to win the Little Drum Runners for 2023? Very excited, I did not know we could go that fast or ever beat my friend Maya because she is so good at it, but I just tried my best and I couldn't believe I did a 21 second run
What was your favourite part of the ABHA finals? Riding under lights for the first time, and probably winning a buckle the day after my Mum won a buckle too.
Who are your biggest idols in the barrel racing world? Katina Mathew's and Gangster Bridie Palmer and Dyno



Pheobe Usher & Morns Posh Roc

2023 1D Junior Champions! Pheobe Usher & Morns Posh Roc

Horse's Stable Name: Posh

How long have you been riding the horse you won on and tell us a bit about how he came into your hands? My Grandmother Mathea Usher bred Posh and sold her to Ruth O'Donoghue. Mum and Dad then bought Posh off Montana O'Donoghue in April 2021 and ever since we have been inseparable, we just clicked and have made a very strong bond. Posh is out of Dennys Royal Morn and By Flashy Pepto. Posh is 13years old but certainly thinks she is a lot younger; she is a very sensitive and quirky mare that will always put in 110% every run.

What did this win mean to you? Winning the Junior 1D at ABHA has always been a big dream of mine and to achieve it on Posh was just so special.

What did you enjoy most about attending the 2023 ABHA National Finals? ABHA finals are always such a fun time, to be able to catch up with lots of friends and be surrounded by such amazing and supportive people within the same sport.

Who is your competition support team and who brought you to the finals? My Mum and Dad have always been my biggest supporters. They have given me every opportunity to achieve my goals. Also, my family, they are always cheering me on whether they're at the event with me or from home. I feel I also need to mention the open competitors that are always there sharing their knowledge with me and giving me guidance. Mum took me and one of my younger siblings to finals. We had only just gotten home the week before from being on the road for 3 months on the road, travelling on the APRA northern run. 2023 was a busy year.

How do you juggle barrel racing with your schooling? Constantly being on the road and trying to barrel race and rodeo while keeping up with school is quite a challenge. Most times, I try to stay ahead and do as much as I can before the weekend hits, so that I'm a lot more relaxed knowing I'm up to date or at least a little ahead.

Name your all-time favourite Australian & World horse and rider combinations? This is quite a tricky question, my answer to this question would be, that there are so many international and Australian competitors and Australians competing in the states now, it is difficult to name one team. I get a lot of enjoyment from watching all of our top competitors whether it is on videos or at a rodeo, there are so many shining stars.

2023 1D Reserve Junior Champion - Dakayla Crawley & Boots

1D 3rd Place Summar Barnett & Hard One to Please



Grace Moloney & Gutshot

2023 2D Junior Champions! Grace Moloney & Gutshot

How long have you been riding the horse you won on and tell us a bit about how he came into your hands?

I have been riding Gutshot for about 5 years now. He is home bred and raised. He's a stock horse out of one of dad's campdraft mares and by Mallanganee Wellshot (by Popgun), hence why his name is Gutshot. He's about 10 years old now. He very rarely does anything wrong, very much the teacher's pet and extremely naturally talented.

What did this win mean to you? To win the 2D title on Gutshot meant a lot to me considering he was one of the horses I first started barrel racing on. To look back on old videos and see how much we've grown together is really amazing.

What did you enjoy most about attending the 2023 ABHA National Finals? I always love the atmosphere, especially watching the top 50, it's so cool seeing the girls at the top going so fast.

Who is your competition support team and who brought you to the finals? My whole family and friends are very supportive. My Dad drove my horses and I all the way to Tamworth so I'm very grateful, especially for letting me barrel race his campdraft horse!

Name your all-time favourite world horse and rider combination? I have a few favourites that I love to watch. I would definitely name Brittany Pozzi Tonozi and Benny and also Fallon Taylor and her stud.

Name your all-time favourite Australian horse and rider combination? I love watching Wendy Caban and Jlo, Brittany McVicar and Epic, Katina Matthews and Gangster.

How do you juggle barrel racing with your schooling? I keep on top of the schoolwork and get everything done first so I don't have to worry about anything later while I'm busy.



2D Reserve Champion Summer Barnett & Katherine
2D 3rd placegetter Jack Mcqualter-Whyte & Fame
2D 4th placegetter Dakota Auld & Lira

ATTENTION STALLION OWNERS

- In the best interest of safety this rule will be enforced at the ABHA Finals
- FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN \$500 FINE



A blue ribbon must be worn in the stallions tail



Alana Hungerford & Pepper

3D Junior Champion!

How long have you been riding the horse you won on and tell us a bit about how she came into your hands? Pepper is an 18 year old stockhorse. I have had her for just over 4 years now. My Mum saw an ad on Facebook and my Stepdad took me down to have a look at her. Pepper was the next step up for me, after selling my main childhood horse. When I test rode her, she had so many buttons I didn't know how to press at first, but my Stepdad and the lovely lady who owned her knew that I was going to learn so much from her. We have done a bit of everything together since then, but it was only at the start of 2023 we decided to give barrel racing a crack. I wouldn't even know how to describe her quirks in writing, she has such a unique personality and keeps me on my toes with her attitude some days that's for sure. She is a powerhouse to ride and a blessing to own.

What did this win mean to you? This win really meant a lot to me. Pepper and I didn't have the easiest ride to finals, but it is a reminder that hard work does pay off and to never give up.

What did you enjoy most about attending the 2023 ABHA National Finals? The best part of the finals was doing it with my older sister, Chloe. It was my first year doing an ABHA Finals and a big thank you to the committee, volunteers and sponsors for running such a fantastic event.

Who is your competition support team and who bought you to the finals? My family and friends I have made through barrel racing. My main support person is my older sister who also barrel races. She is the reason I started in the first place and has helped Pepper and I get to where we are, and I could not be more grateful. She took me every day to finals and helped get Pep and I get sorted before every run.

Name your all-time favourite world horse and rider combination? My favourite would probably be Sissy Winn and her horse Patrick she's been training. He looks like such a cool dude! She always puts the welfare of her horses before the sport, she shows her appreciation to the people who support her and she works hard, qualities which I admire.

Name your all-time favourite Australian horse and rider combination? It's hard to pick one but Katina Matthews and Gangster are an unbelievable combination to watch and I'm sure 90% of barrel racers dream of competing at the level they do. She is a true professional in the sport, her horses always look their best, and she is very humble.

How do you juggle barrel racing with your schooling? It wasn't the easiest as I lived away for school. I boarded during the week and came home early on Fridays to get an extra ride in before the weekend. My older sister very kindly took Pep in and rode her during the week while I was at school, and really helped in the lead up to finals.



3D Reserve Champion
Hayleigh Hilton
& Lagoon Instant Playgirl
3D 3rd placegetter
Ayda Labuschewski & Sid
3D 4th placegetter
Jessica Howard & Gyprock

Seri McCulloch & Timmy

4D Junior Champion!

How long have you been riding the horse you won on and tell us a bit about how he came into your hands? Only riding him for about 12 months before finals as he is my dad's polocrosse horse, He was the only one still in at the end of the season so took him to a couple of the LPP Barrel racing days, he took well to running barrels as he is quite a strong horse to ride outside the arena

What did this win mean to you? It was quite the surprise as this was the first time to finals and I entered purely for the experience of Finals and to catch up with friends

What did you enjoy most about attending the 2023 ABHA National Finals? The experience of riding against great competitors and in a great facility, the encouragement from other competitors and volunteers was appreciated by myself and by everyone who supported me

Who is your competition support team and who brought you to the finals? My Mum on the first day and my Dad on the second, and were both there for presentation.

Name your all-time favorite horse and rider combination?

Bridie Palmer and Dynamic, I enjoy watching my friends succeed in their chosen sports.

How do you juggle barrel racing with your schooling?

I allocate my afternoon to my horses first and then once they are all taken care of I dedicate my time to schoolwork 😊



4D Reserve Champion Lakota Clarke & Bud
4D 3rd placegetter Paige Kriesch & Jedi
4D 4th placegetter Matilda-Kate Fielding & Rissy

Michelle O'Neill



It is with deep sadness and respect that we advise our members of the recent sudden and unexpected passing of a former Australian Barrel Horse board member, competitor and friend to many, Michelle O'Neill. Michelle served on the Australian Barrel Horse Board over a period of 8 years.

Given Michelle's service to our association, along with the hard work of other board members, the ABHA is the strong and successful association that we see today. Michelle was also a clinician and horse trainer who loved to pass on her vast knowledge across many disciplines and in particular, the sport of barrel racing.

Equitana was also of Michelle's great loves, having won the prestigious Equitana Barrel Race on Kiandra Morn in 2016. Michelle has also remained with the Equitana committee, organising and supporting this national event right through to her untimely death. Losing Michelle has rocked the Snowy Monaro community and reverberated through the wider horse community including the barrel racing world. It is evident from the comments from those who knew her most, all have commented on Michelle's big smile and willingness to help others learn and appreciate their horses.



In her forty-nine years as a competitor, trainer, mentor and friend Michelle touched the lives of many, so much so that the team from Affinity with the support of Michelle's family have united to offer a special award in her honour at this year's finals. Michelle being one to always help others and a stalwart for good horsemanship, those close to her believe this special buckle should be awarded as an ABHA Finals Horsemanship award here after, in her memory. The award will be judged around a select criterion, over the course of the finals by a small panel who have excelled in the sport, served with Michelle on the board in the past and are aware of what Michelle stood for and what attributes Michelle would find the winner worthy of the award. We thank Affinity and Michelle's family for allowing us to pay tribute and bringing us all together to remember her in this way.

There will be a minute's silence in the program at this year's finals as a mark of respect.

*"You can shed
tears that she has
left us or you can
celebrate that she
has lived."*

ALL THE BELLS & WHISTLES

Megan McLoughlin

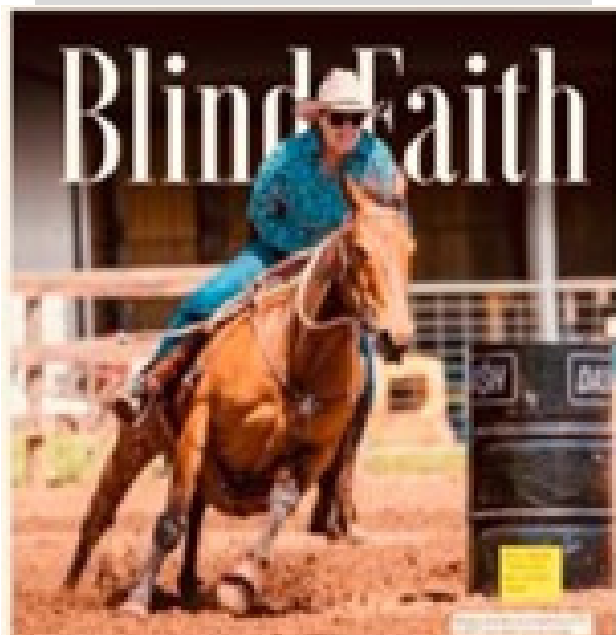


At this year's finals we have a very inspirational story with the extremely talented horsewoman, Megan McLoughlin who brings precision and timing in our sport to a whole new level.

Some may have heard about Megan already, for she has a need for speed like most of us, the only difference is she is legally blind and has been since the age of twenty-six. The old adage, "if you want something bad enough you will make it work", seems like a great saying but the practicality and hurdles to be legally blind and be competitive in the sport of barrel racing would be like climbing a mountain for others. Megan however takes it all in her stride, she first contacted the ABHA recently to explain what was required for her to compete at AELEC, which in fact, is very little. Her technique is based on echo location and therefore just needed to gain approval to have two whistle blowers on the exterior of the arena, one near the 2nd drum and the other at the third. Megan through trial and error has used other methods to negotiate her way around the pattern, one of those being the use of a head set communications with her two

assistants. This method detracted from Megan's ability to be in tune with her horse and believes that out of everything she has trialed thus far, echo location is what she has perfected is the best as it does not compromise the feel with her horse. Megan will sit with someone and will listen and count the hoof beats and strides from first to second, second to third and home which helps her prepare for her run. She runs with two hands around the whole pattern, to avoid becoming disorientated during her run. As I spoke to Megan it became apparent that prior to her becoming legally blind she was quite the horsewoman and hailed from a long line of generational and legendary cowboys and cowgirls from South Australia, the Willoughby family. She was born in the saddle and had an accomplished and decorated career in barrel racing as a Junior and open competitor. Megan won five Junior National Barrel Racing titles, two merit awards with the AQHA, eight APRA state barrel racing titles and an APRA Rookie barrel racing titles. In 2000-2003 Megan attended college in the United States and barrel raced through the ABAC in Georgia, USA and Megan recalls this as a great opportunity and wonderful time in her life.

Megan was diagnosed as a Type One Diabetic. At the age of twenty-six she attended a clinic to have laser surgery on her eyes, unbeknown to her the laser machine had not been calibrated correctly and consequently over lasered her eyes, sending 8000 hits into her eyes and leaving her with just 7% eye sight. Even twenty-seven operations in eight weeks, could not reverse the damage. They say lightning does not strike twice in the same place but only three months later Megan was diagnosed with ironically, a horse shoe kidney and was heading into renal failure. A kidney and pancreas transplant was required and once again Megan faced this head on, which is where her yearning to once again barrel race really kicked in again. Through her transplant she met legendary South Australian cowboy Steve Earnst, himself a good horseman and heart transplant recipient. Steve and Megan became good friends in 2018 when they were both involved in the cattle drive, Herd for Hope, where they moved the cattle onto Bondi Beach to raise funds and highlight rural health. It was here that Megan told Steve of her dream to once again



barrel race and she knew she needed that special horse to enable her to do so. Steve said he knew of the perfect horse just outside Tamworth. This was how Biccie found his way into Megan's life. His purchase for the purpose to train him on barrels was a bit of a secret, even to her family as this was part of her plan to once again compete in barrel racing Biscuit or Biccie as he is affectionately known is a 12 year old gelding, who Megan says she trusts more than most people and rightfully so. Biccie is by a quarter horse stallion, Oaks Spin out of a winning unregistered campdraft mare known as Image. He was purchased from Katrina Edwards, outside of Tamworth and is the horse Megan dreamed of to make a comeback to the sport of barrel racing. He is a quirky, sure footed gelding who is now running about half a second to a second off the front runners at South Australian APRA rodeo barrel races.

It has been a three year goal of Megan's to attend the ABHA finals and we welcome her with open arms, what a story. Biccie has commenced his journey on horse transport and today being 29th August, should arrive in Tamworth today. Megan has been beside herself worried about him as he travels ahead of her and is constantly checking in with the two different horse transport companies she has entrusted him. Megan flies into Tamworth with her sassy little eight year old and mature for her years daughter Ella who assists in guiding her mum around when needed along with her two friends, the whistle blowers this Saturday ahead of the finals.

Nine weeks ago Megan also had a right hip replacement, but she was sure that this was not going to stop her from attending the ABHA National Finals this year and a week after her return home she will undergo a breast mastectomy due to a breast cancer diagnosis. After speaking with Megan, I am in awe of her empowering journey which has taken incredible resilience, intellect and some of her stories point to the fact she has a wicked sense of humour. In true Megan style, she remarked that there are plenty worse off than her and she gets to be a mother to two beautiful children and get up in the morning and still do what she has always enjoyed. So if you hear the whistles at draw 212 of the Open Divisional competition in the AELEC stadium, know that this is Megan doing what she enjoys and come cheer her on. What a wonderful role model to us all.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

