



Chilly temperatures in the 20s and 30s greeted Sun Circuit exhibitors each morning of the show, which was January 25-February 2. Highs were mostly in the 50s to 60s, which is much cooler than normal for Scottsdale, Arizona.

That's Just Super

Heavy rain, chilly temperatures and a football game couldn't put a damper on the 2008 Arizona Sun Circuit.

**Story and photos by
Tonya Ratliff-Garrison**

KELLY PENROD URGED THE SORREL GELDING TOWARD the large puddle. Lotto Details looked down at his reflection in the water and gingerly stepped into it.

"I can't believe he did that so easily," Kelly shouted to Lotto Details' owner Katie Boyle of Tucson, Arizona. "He's such a good boy."

By January 28, puddles were everywhere at Westworld, home of the 35th annual Arizona Sun Circuit. The day before, 1.5 inches of rain had fallen on Scottsdale, Arizona, making the 120-acre equestrian center a muddy mess. Many of the outdoor arenas were unusable, and water flooded the portable horse stalls as well as the show office.

However, because of recent improvements to the grounds, the show was able to go on. The events were moved to the covered arenas, which sometimes housed two classes at once.



Kelly Penrod of Marana, Arizona, asks Lotto Details to walk through a puddle of water as they leave the Wendell Arena, where a practice trail course was set up. Record rainfall soaked the outdoor arenas.

“Two years ago when it rained, it was a total disaster and we had to close the show,” said Sun Circuit show director Jan Bruner. “But even though this was a challenge this year, we didn’t have to cancel anything.”

But rain wasn’t the only thing Sun Circuit had to contend with this year. Even before Sun Circuit started, Super Bowl XLII played havoc with the event, driving the cost of hotel rooms to as much as \$699 a night.

“It definitely cut down on our entry numbers this year,” Jan said.

Sun Circuit usually has almost 2,000 Quarter Horses entered, but this year, entries dipped by 25 percent.

“But despite everything, it’s been a great show this year,”



Marsha Leatherwood of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Zippos Heart Of Gold make their way through the Select trail course. The rainfall earlier in the show soaked the outdoor arenas, causing Arena 5A to be divided in half so western pleasure classes could be run simultaneously with the trail classes.



Roger Call and Artful Persuasion move to the inside track to pass Melissa Doddridge and Movin Artfully in the amateur pleasure driving class.



Jon Hershberger of Glendale, Arizona, and his mare, Up Straight, turn their steer in the Select heading class. The event is normally in one of Westworld’s outdoor arenas but had to be moved to a covered arena because of the soggy ground outside.

Jan continued. "It could have been a disaster, but everything has run fairly smooth."

Next year will be even better. The city of Scottsdale is planning to make improvements to Westworld, including two new show offices, storm-drainage capacity and 300 new permanent stalls.

"And best of all, no Super Bowl," Jan said with a smile. 🐾

Tonya Ratliff-Garrison is a field editor for The American Quarter Horse Journal. She can be reached at tonyag@aqha.org.



Five-year-old Jordan Davis of Huntsville, Texas, sits atop her grandmother's horse, Amblin Good N Easy. Sandra Fitzgerald had just finished showing the 7-year-old mare in Select western riding. But it wasn't the horse Sandra bragged about. It was her granddaughter, whom she said placed first in the Sun Circuit lead-line class earlier that weekend.



AQHA Professional Horseman Chuck Briggs of Azle, Texas, works Silent Screen Star. The sorrel mare is owned by Polo Ridge Farms of Monmouth, Oregon.



Jessica Johnson of Pickerington, Ohio, is decked out in silver and black while warming up Royalty In Blue for pleasure driving.



Ina Ginsberg of Carefree, Arizona, staved off the chilly temps with a fur coat while driving around the Westworld grounds in her golf cart.



AQHA Professional Horseman Leslie Lange of Greeley, Colorado, sits atop her gelding, Kamanyawannadance, while he awaits his turn in the senior working hunter class.



AQHA Professional Horseman Joe McAllister of Southbury, Connecticut, traveled around the grounds in style on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Sun Circuit All-Arounds

Amateur: Royalty In Blue

Exhibitor: Jessica Johnson, Pickerington, Ohio
Owner: Barbara Johnson, Pickerington, Ohio

Select: Wonit Ona RV Version

Exhibitor/Owner: Vickie Kent, Graceville, Florida

Novice Amateur: Easily An Artist

Exhibitor/Owner: Kimberly Ann Contreras, Sacramento, California

Junior Horse: By All Means Baby

Owner: Angela Fox, Little Elm, Texas

Senior Horse: Show Diva

Owner: Joe and Karen Moran, Laguna Hills, California

14-18 Youth: Credits For Heaven

Exhibitor/Owner: Rebecca Ries, Loveland, Colorado

Novice Youth: Dynamic Dream Seeker

Exhibitor/Owner: Sydney Elliott, Meridian, Idaho

13-and-Under Youth: Radical By Choice

Exhibitor/Owner: Erin Gillette, Paradise Valley, Arizona