



Susan Yohn longes Winsome Legally.

Legally a Success

The Region Five Experience saw new exhibitors and veterans facing challenges.

**Article and photos by
Larri Jo Starkey**

“MITCH” WAS A SCRAWNY BABY, BUT SUSAN YOHN COULD SEE PAST the tiny little legs.

“He came and untied my shoelaces,” she said. “I liked him the moment I saw him because he was very flashy and had a cute personality right from the get-go.”

Good thing, since Susan bred her mare, Watch Me Winsome, to The Legal Eagle to produce Winsome Legally.

Watch Me Winsome had been a wedding present from Susan’s husband, who wanted to hook her on the American Quarter Horse lifestyle. Mission accomplished. After a successful showing career, Susan started breeding Watch Me Winsome, with Mitch her second foal.

Susan broke Mitch herself. The two of them have gone everywhere together, gathering points by the buckets in just about every class until June 2008 when Mitch came up a little lame.

“I have no idea what happened,” Susan said. “He came in out of the field and he was three-legged lame.”

After tests, Mitch underwent surgery at New Bolton Center, where three bone chips were removed from his knee and a fourth large one screwed back into place.

“He won’t go through the airport very well,” Susan jokes now, but it wasn’t funny then. Mitch, an active chestnut who enjoys his turnout, was limited to stall rest and short walks.

It was March this year before Susan could climb aboard again. In July Susan took him to the 2009 Region Five Experience in Syracuse, New York, and he was golden.

In most stories about lame horses, a successful recovery is where the stories end, but Susan had another challenge to overcome.

“I had a bad inner-ear infection in December 2008,” she said. “They kinda labeled it shingles in the inner ear, and it resulted in Bell’s palsy in my face. What it left me with is nerve damage inside my head, which causes a lot of spinning, a lot of dizziness. It’s not vertigo. It’s inside my head, not outside.

“It has been a long, long recovery for me, because sometimes I’ll walk like I’m totally drunk. Trying to do the showmanship, where you have to do the turnaround – whoo – that gets challenging. It’s almost like being on a rollercoaster.”

Susan gives the credit for her return to showing to Mitch.

“He has been phenomenal. He’s very special,” she said. “I sound like I’m bragging, but it’s not me. It’s the horse.”

Larri Jo Starkey is managing editor of AQHA publications. To comment, write to lstarkey@aqha.org. To read more stories from the Region Five Experience, go online to www.americashorsedaily.com and click on Journal on the Road.



Brad and Vicki Wiest went online to the Region Five Web site and decided a couple of days ahead to attend. They got up at 3 a.m. to make the 200-mile journey from Leck Kill, Pennsylvania, to Syracuse, New York. Their whim paid off, as they won the ranch sorting on Royal Tam Missy and Okay Little Smarty.



Cindi Madej’s 3-year-old mare, Pardon My Curiosity, was pulled from her dying dam, C’Est Nahar (TB). “Betty” was bottle-fed for 48 hours and ended up spending three days in a critical-care unit. During the Region Five Experience in Syracuse, New York, Betty proved she has recovered by finishing ninth in junior hunter under saddle in her first show.

ALL-AROUND WINNERS

- **Open**
Anita Gravener of Guilford, New York, and Mellow Country Star
- **Amateur**
Rebecca Kosbob of Oswego, New York, and RL Ima Zip Code
- **Novice Amateur**
Karin Holt of Baldwinsville, New York, and Achina
- **Youth**
Kaitlyn Bello of Weedsport, New York, and Lady Ann Mellow
- **Novice Youth**
Jenna Striffler of Lockport, New York, and Naturally Gallant
- **Select**
Marilyn Eaves of Branchport, New York, and Shes Good Gucci