

away with the title. Her first run came on Thursday night, March 15. Kay Blandford of Sutherland Springs, Texas, had set the bar high aboard her mare, Angel, in the first round with a time of 14.96 seconds recorded on opening night, March 14. Lord jockeyed Cowboy through the cloverleaf pattern and stopped the clock in 15.11 seconds, good for a second place finish and a check worth \$2,528. With the winning time, Blandford picked up a check totaling \$3,370.

In the second round, Terri Wood-Gates of West Jordan, Utah, would match Lord's time from the first round, 15.11 seconds, to win the round and pocket \$3,370. Lord and Blandford finished out of the money with times of 15.28 seconds and 15.34, respectively.

Wood-Gates won the two head average with a total time of 30.23 seconds and collected another check totaling \$3,370. Blandford finished second with a time of 30.30 seconds and pocketed a



**NON-MEMBER SHALI LORD, WHO FIRST RODE TO PROMINENCE AS A WPRA MEMBER, WON THE DNCFR CHAMPIONSHIP.**

KENNETH SPRINGER

check for \$2,528, while Lord was third with a 30.39 and won \$1,685.

Following the first two rounds of competition the top eight ladies in the average advanced to the semifinal round on Saturday night, March 17. All previous times were erased and everyone started with a clean slate.

Wood-Gates continued her winning ways in the semifinal round stopping the clock in 15.05 seconds and added another \$3,370 to her bank account. Her closest competitor was Blandford with a 15.14-second run. Key-Fischer, of Ledbetter, Texas, finished third

aboard her horse Round Pen in a time of 15.22 seconds, while Lord and Lyndee Stairs of Hanford, Calif., tied for fourth with times of 15.25 seconds. With only the top four advancing to the final round, known as the Wrangler Round, officials would have to use the tie-breaker rule for Lord and Stairs. Lord would win the tie-

breaker as she had the faster average time.

Once in the Wrangler Round Lord left nothing to chance. As the first competitor out she set the bar with a clean run of 15.31 seconds. Key-Fischer tried to match it, but fell short with a time of 15.45 seconds. Blandford, who had turned in three clean runs, hit a barrel in the final round to finish in a time of 20.39. It was down to Wood-Gates and her horse Britlyn for all the marbles. With three clean runs and two winning times under her belt the stage was set for a fabulous finish. In the end, she would down a barrel in the final round and finish third in the round with a time of 20.22 seconds, leaving Lord as the 2007 DNCFR champion.

"I wanted to bring Cowboy here because he is so smooth and I really believed he could do it," explained Lord regarding her decision to bring her backup horse Cowboy. "With so many runs expected here in such a short time frame, I felt I could be consistent on him because I don't get as



LARRY SMITH

**Current World Standings leader Kay Blandford has been on a hot streak since the beginning of the year.**



LARRY SMITH

**Kay Blandford earned more than \$9,200 in Pocatello.**

nervous on him. He really stayed calm and it all worked out for us."

Lord, not only won the title and the Montana Silversmiths buckle that accompanies the title, but she won a one-year lease on a brand new Dodge Truck and earned automatic berths into the first two playoff series events in Caldwell, Idaho (Aug. 14-18) and Puyallup, Wash. (Sept. 7-9) as part of the Wrangler ProRodeo Tour.

Wood-Gates was the big money winner with \$13,480, followed by Blandford with \$9,268, Lord with \$8,004 and Key-Fischer with \$4,213.

Unique to the DNCFR is the fact that contestants not only compete for themselves but also as a team. This year the **Wilderness Circuit** won the team title with total earnings of \$74,574. **Texas** was second with \$66,049 and **Columbia River** was third with \$44,093.