

# Junior Division Offers New Opportunities

BY JOLEE LAUTARET

**I**t remains one of the most indelible images of WPRA history. Blonde curls bobbing, bat clinched firmly between her teeth, a barely teenaged Clayton, New Mexico cowgirl roared into the history books of barrel racing. Charmayne James was just fourteen when she and super horse Scamper won the first of a record ten world championships. Along the way, she captured the hearts of rodeo fans across the nation.

Sixteen years earlier, another youngster was the talk of the rodeo world. Ann Lewis put together a stellar season in 1968 and qualified to the National Finals Rodeo at the age of just nine. Tragedy struck, however, as Ann was killed in an automobile accident toward the end of the season.



Her earnings were enough for Ann to be awarded the WPRA World Championship posthumously.

The site of young girls guiding their top equine partners flawlessly through a barrel pattern disappeared in the mid-nineties when the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association initiated a mandatory age limit of eighteen years of age for competitors at PRCA sanctioned rodeos. Due to the relationship between the two sanctioning bodies at the time, the WPRA followed suit and little girls no longer had a place in professional rodeo.

Well, the WPRA is bringing the girls back.

Beginning in 2007, the WPRA has instituted a WPRA Juniors Division for all girls aged seventeen and under. The junior division will introduce a whole new group of members to the ranks of professional competition and will allow mothers and daughters to compete for world points at the some of the same events.

Juniors will run in WPRA Junior sanctioned races as well as co-sanctioned divisional races and rodeos to earn points for the WPRA World Finals to be held in Alvarado, Texas in October. Juniors can only earn points in WPRA Junior Division races, in co-sanctioned rodeos, and in the 1D of co-sanctioned divisional races. Juniors are not competing against WPRA members for points nor will they be eligible to enter WPRA events or rodeos.

The top five juniors from each of the twelve circuits along with the top twenty from WPRA Junior World standings will qualify to the World Finals. At the finals, the girls will have the opportunity to compete for cash, prizes, and college scholarships thanks to the generosity of the Saddle Up! Foundation

of Colorado. Also new this year will be a bonus prize for the fastest mother-daughter team during the Finals.

Among the big name races to be co-sanctioned for the WPRA juniors is the world renowned Josey Junior World Championship barrel race. Hosted by legends RE and Martha Josey, the 1980 WPRA World Champion, this race has played host to thousands of aspiring barrel racers through the years, many of whom have gone on to tremendous success in the ranks of the WPRA.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Josey Junior World Championships will be held May 2-6, 2007 at the Josey Ranch in Marshall, Texas. With \$2500 added cash, an average of nearly three hundred entries, and a prize line to make any barrel racer salivate, this prestigious event will feature two preliminary rounds of competition. Junior barrel racers are allowed to take their fastest time to the semi-finals, consisting of fifty runners. The top twenty on two runs following the semis move on to the short go where the arena is groomed following every runner. The winners are crowned on a three head average.

Josey's also features a speech contest, best dressed awards, a World Championship Stick Horse Race, and awards for the Horse with the Most Heart, among others. Visit [www.barrelracers.com](http://www.barrelracers.com) for more information.

WPRA Junior members are already earning points at co-sanctioned divisional races and rodeos as well as WPRA Junior events. And with several WPRA rodeos signing on for a juniors' race, rodeo fans may once again be cheering on the little girls and their amazing equine partners as they ride for World Championships.

For more information and membership applications, please visit [www.wpra.com](http://www.wpra.com).

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