

# The Zane Schulte Memorial Award

## *Gaylon Wells – Oklahoma cutter who loves helping his Amateurs and Non-Pros earns prestigious award*

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By Jatona Sucamele

**L**iving 52 of his 57 year in Sulphur, Oklahoma, Gaylon Wells has established himself as a trainer who is happy if his customers and fellow cutters are happy. One of his nominators for the Zane Schulte Award, Frank Harrison, wrote, "Gaylon Wells exemplifies honesty, service, integrity, values, respect for peers, contribution to the industry and excellence in the arena.

"Gaylon is never too busy to help any contestant despite his or her skill level. If you are around Gaylon very long, he will tell you he is the luckiest man in the world to wake up every morning and do a job that he loves. He will also tell you that faith, family and friends drive his life in and out of the arena. He is the first in the arena and usually the last to leave. His favorite saying is, 'Everyone, no matter what level of competition they are in, deserves 100 percent and I am honored to help them.'"

When he got the call from Barbra Schulte that he had won he was shocked. "I told Barbra when she called me, I'm speechless and I'm not speechless often, and it is a great honor. I feel like I have to be a better person to live up to this. I got a certificate last year for being nominated, but I didn't know that I was nominated this year."

Wells grew up around horses and never strayed too far from them. During the five years not spent in Sulphur, Wells lived in Kansas City working for the Richardson Ranch, where he furthered his cutting career and then moved his family back home.

"I grew up in the cowboy world and I've done everything else with them, race horses, halter horses, cowboy-ing and otherwise. I always had a passion for cutters, but never really had the opportunity to focus on it.

"When I was about thirty years old I decided that was just what I was going to do, and I left everything else to learn about the cutting world. It was a school of hard knocks for me at first, because I had to learn by watching and really paying attention to other trainers while juggling other things to make a living. Wayne Bottom and his family helped me a lot. I worked for Ed Bottom for a time. We lived close by and I'm glad they were there."

His wife's name is Sunny and they have three sons, Josh, Even and Gage. "We were high school sweethearts," Wells said, "and we've been married for 38 years. Josh is 35 and has three kids and lives here by us. Evan is 28 and has a son and lives in Saint Louis, about an hour away, and runs his own cow/calf operation. Gage is 21 and studied natural gas compression and works close by for Energy Transfer."



All three of Sunny and Gaylon's sons are in the NYCHA Hall of Fame and had good show careers. When Gage is through obtaining his engineering degree, he plans to come back to cutting. Wells is thankful for the life his family has led and for his boys growing up in the cutting industry.

"To me, growing up in this lifestyle has just molded those boys into what they are today. Not only is it so family oriented, but it places the kids in a phase of their life learning the responsibility they need as they grow up to make better adults of them. To have that work ethic and have the responsibility of knowing how to take care of things and pursue what they want out of life. Growing up in the cutting atmosphere with that opportunity is what set the pace for them and their adult lives, it was really good for them."

Wells said that he is a pretty simple kind of guy who doesn't really like to talk about himself much. That goes along with his description of his program.

"My program has always been more about my Amateurs than about myself. If they were having success it was, in return, successful for me because it kept me in business. If my customers had good horses and were win-

ning, it kept me in a job. That job has been very enjoyable and a great livelihood for my family."

Although Wells might not talk about himself too much, David House had really good things to say in his nomination letter: "Gaylon is the definition of the attributes celebrated by the award. He enjoys the highest reputation of all trainers for integrity, service and helping others.

"His customers love him, his peers beg him to help them with their cow picking, and he always has his horses ready to go to the herd. He is a stickler for following the rules and lives his personal and professional life by the cowboy code. He has taken horses to the top 15 in the \$3,000 Novice, the Open and has customers in the top 15 in the \$50,000 Amateur the last few years and in the top 15 in the Non-Pro this year. He is a director from Area 8 and faithfully attends all the meetings. I do not know of a more deserving person for this award than Gaylon."

Lisa Roberts said, "I have known Gaylon for many years and have watched him exhibit all the characteristics that qualify him for this honorable and cherished award."

Wells has had some horses that have been good to him along the way to his life-time NCHA earnings of \$533,898. One such horse, by Docs Voyager and out of Peppy San Tivio, was Frozen Voyager, whose ears were frozen off when he was born, hence the name. "I had the opportunity to ride him when I first was getting into cutting and I made the semi-finals in the Super Stakes on him. He turned out to be a really good horse and helped me along.

"Purr N Cat is the mare that I made the Open World finals on in 2013. She has been a very good horse for me and is in my barn now. A horse I rode in Kansas City, Lenas Flit Star, won a lot of money for me for a couple of years. I really enjoyed riding Ollies Combo Man when I was training for the Richardson Ranch in Kansas City."

Though Wells has ridden plenty of young horses, his current program is mostly an older horse program.

"I quit riding the younger ones a couple of years ago because I had some customers who wanted to haul and make a run for the World Finals. I have customers who made the Finals in the Non-Pro and the Amateur this year."

"I guess making the Open World finals in 2013 would be the highlight for me, and then going to the World finals and having a successful show was the icing on the cake. It has been such a great way to make a living for my family and we're not slowing down in it at all. As long as my customers want to go, we're going to go and give it our all." ★



## 2015 Zane Schulte Award And the Nominees are....

Eddie Wayne Bottom	Casey Moore
Thomas Bray	Danny Moore
Lindy Burch	Gary Moore
Karla Jo Camp	Nick O'Dell
Carey Cathey	Scott Raftery
Brett Davis	Ronnie Rice
Keith Deaville	Jonathan Rogers
Fons de Barbanson	Ronnie Sharpe
Grady Duncan	Tom Shelly
Lee Francois	Austin Shepard
Todd Gann	Ted Sokol
Paul Hansma	Josh Townsend
Cletus Hulling, Jr.	Gaylon Wells
Jim MacKay	Bronc Willoughby
Tommy Marvin	
Dylan Meyer	



(left) Gaylon and his family. (above) Gaylon Wells on Purr N Cat.