



An Epic Team



HOLLY SAIGO AND SHOW HORSES CHASE DREAMS, WIN

Holly Saigo, General Counsel at Kimball Midwest, grew up with horses. They are an important part of her life, and she devotes her spare time to riding and showing at competitions across the country. In 2017, with her

black stallion, Epic, Holly fulfilled a lifelong goal by winning a World Champion title at the American Quarter Horse Association World (AQHA) Championship Show (referred to as the World Show) in Oklahoma City. In mid-November, she and Epic again won gold, defending their World title for 2018.

How long have you been doing this?

My whole life! I've been riding since I was 3 and started showing when I was 8 or 9, but at a really low level—4H and local shows. I could never afford a show-quality horse or lessons with a trainer, so I kind of fumbled through it myself.

I've always had World Show dreams—finally got there in 2015! And since 2012 I've shown at the Quarter Horse Congress (in Columbus, Ohio). The Congress is the world's largest Quarter Horse show and it is a privilege to show there. [Holly and Epic also won there in 2017.]

Is Epic the only horse you have?

Actually, I sold Epic at the World Show. There was a lady who saw him, fell in love with him and just had to have him.

I show a horse named Jack. It's a small world—Dennis Smith [Director of Sales for Team Southeast and Team Central] has two sons: Matt and Adam. Matt works for Kimball. Adam worked for horse trainer, Brent Tincer. I was looking for a trainer for Jack and I'd worked with Dennis for years, so I asked whether he thought Brent and I would get along. And he knows that I'm a little bit Type A. And Brent is probably the most Type A guy out there. When I called Dennis, he just laughed and said, "Uh, yeah. I think that'll work." I guess he thinks I'm more than a little Type A!

I've got two mares that I do ranch sorting on—chasing cows. One I call Tater Tot because she's little, and brown and round like a tater tot. The other is Allie Cat—that's just the name she came with. And I've got two pasture pets: Boudreaux and Dewey.



So, Jack is the one you'll be entering competitions with?

The two cow horses—Allie and Tater Tot—have big competitions in Las Vegas and Fort Worth this year. And yes, I'll be showing Jack, as well.

How many competitions have you won?

I've been blessed to show at some big shows and have some success. With Jack, I had several top five finishes at the AQHA Level 1 Championships and a national top 10 ranking. I've gone to the ranch sorting finals the past two years, and I won the Congress with Tater Tot this year.

Then last year, the impossible dream of winning the World Show with Epic. And again this year, which was shocking. They almost had to dig a hole in the arena and bury me there because I was so excited, I nearly died. Of course, then you come home and back to reality - work horses, clean stalls, put up hay, scrub the water trough. The glamorous life for sure!

What does it take to prepare a horse for competitions?

It depends on the event. I showed Epic in halter classes. They're judged on conformation, temperament, gait. The trainers have it down to a fine art because it's like body building: nutrition, workout and even grooming to make sure the horses' coats look correct. My involvement from that standpoint is limited. I go and practice with the horse and make sure I can read his body language and get him shown properly.

For the all-around stuff, I show Jack in horsemanship, showmanship, equitation and trail. It requires a lot of work from me as well as the trainer: consistent riding, physical conditioning and very technical, event-specific skills. My goal is to show at the World Show in one of those classes, but I'm not anywhere near ready yet!

For ranch sorting, we work to keep the horses really fit and agile because they have to run and stop and turn at high speeds and be very responsive. It also requires a lot of work on the rider, to learn how to stay centered through all those fast maneuvers without falling off. In 2017, I fell off at the finals. It was awesome. I'm living proof that you cannot die of embarrassment! 🤠

