

# SANTA HILL RANCH

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## A Reiner's Recipe for Success.

There is a recipe for success that serious riders need to follow to become a top reiner. The recipe's ingredients require adjustments to fit the rider and horse, but the basic ingredients need to be present for the best opportunity for success.

Santa Hill Ranch (SHR), located in beautiful Campbell Hall, New York, is a state-of-the-art training and breeding facility situated on 325 acres of scenic farmland and pastures, owned by Bob Santagata. Santagata's goal is to win the NRHA Futurity. “Since the first one I saw, it has been the driving force behind the ranch,” says Santagata. Breeding and training programs at SHR are both geared to that goal. Dean Brown, NRHA Professional and Top 20 Rider, is the head trainer at the ranch. He and Bob are very much on the same page—to be the very best at this sport.

So what are the ingredients for success in the sport of Reining? The main ingredient is an owner who understands this competitive sport. The remaining ingredients are resources (facility and team), rider discipline (motivation and skill),

and the right breeding (fit between rider and horse). Recipe adjustments come into play with the rider and horse. Each rider and horse combination is different, and the skilled trainer determines where to tweak the recipe throughout the training process.

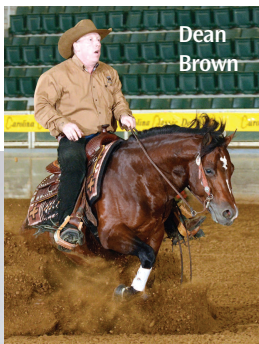
### OWNER COMMITMENT

You can have the right combination of other ingredients, but without a true commitment from the owner and a respect between the owner and trainer, success is unlikely. Brown says, “Bob is the easiest and hardest person I have ever worked for. He lets me do the job he hired me to do. The hard part is the pressure. We feed off of each other's competitiveness, I think. He is a hard guy to let down even though he never expresses it.”

### FACILITIES

In working towards success it helps to have the best facilities and resources at your fingertips. SHR has everything you can think of for getting the job done. The barn layout allows for efficiency and organization. The training and boarding barn includes a 125'x250' indoor climate-controlled riding arena, outdoor riding pen 125'x600', 12'x12' stalls, spacious tack and grooming areas, and wash bays with heated flooring and rubber mats. The ground was done by NRHA Corporate Partner Kiser Arena Specialists and is groomed with a Kiser drag. Training in a well-thought-out facility makes all the difference in preparing for the show pen.

SHR is pleased to announce the opening of their brand new breeding barn, which includes a fully-equipped breeding lab, spacious foaling stalls with walk-outs and mare motel, as well as designated stallion stalls. Santagata explains, “We have been breeding for many years, but I'm particularly excited this season since the new breeding barn is up and running! It has everything needed for successful breeding and mare care.”



Dean Brown



(L-R) Dean Brown and Bob Santagata



## TEAM

A cohesive support system is another essential ingredient to success. If you want to be the best, surround yourself with the best. Staff at SHR give their clients and horses the very best care in and out of the pen. Everyone works together towards the same goal. Brown leads the team and Santagata backs them up 100 percent. "If they don't have the right tools readily available, from the right horses to supplies, the goal becomes further away or unattainable. And, if something doesn't work, we realize it, change it, and move forward," said Santagata.

## RIDER DISCIPLINE AND FIT-TRAINING

A motivated rider has discipline, drive, patience and is open to the direction of their trainer. At SHR, non pro competitors either bring their own horse or they rely on staff expertise to guide them to a great fit.

SHR's colt starting program is second to none. They find the 'gentle-method' to work best in starting horses. How a colt starts makes a significant difference in the future of that horse. Brown does not like to force a young horse to do something; rather he likes to see how well it can learn and solve problems. "We are fortunate that we don't have to force colts to get ready for sale. We get to develop each one to its greatest potential," states Brown.

## BREEDING SELECTION

Always in search of the next Futurity winner, breeding selection is a constant in their minds. Santagata looks for a soft eye and good conformation and leaves the rest up to Brown. "The new breeding barn will allow the breeding part of our program to become a more dominant ingredient in the recipe. Dean and I want to be the best, so we breed the very best, in hopes that we get just the right traits and personality combinations," states Santagata.

SHR has quite a few broodmares including Smart Little Prize (Offspring NRHA LTE \$498,797), who they will be breeding to top-quality stallions. Two stallions currently stand at the ranch—Itsa Bingo Greyhound (LTE: \$37,021, offspring LTE: \$160,619) and Friday Night Shiner (LTE: \$46,894). They are currently offering free breedings to Friday Night Shiner to mares (or mares with offspring earnings) with over \$5,000 in NRHA earnings.

## SUCCESS

Success can mean different things to different people. Brown defines success as getting the absolute best out of each and every horse and rider and not just settling. He should know, having won many bronze trophies and been a finalist in every major event. He states, "Our goal is to win the NRHA Futurity; whether we achieve that goal right away or not does not measure our success. In all reality, success is doing your absolute best no matter what. I could go through all the horses that we have won with (too many to list), but I think a bigger statement of our success is that in

the past seven years SHR has not raised a horse that has not won NRHA money." Perhaps that's an understatement as they have many Level 4 Open Futurity and Derby champions and finalists, world champions, and non pro winners. Their most recent home-bred champion, Cashin Malibus Chex (Too Busy Cashin Chex x Malibu Whiz), was the 2014 ABI Derby Champion and the High Hopes Farm Derby Level 4 Open Champion. This kind of success does not happen



without a well thought-out recipe.

SHR's non pro program has been quite successful, to say the least. The key ingredient to make this happen is being prepared. The horse and rider need to be prepared to the best of their ability. It does not matter if it is a small show or major event, attention to detail is everything. Brown spends the amount of time needed for each horse and rider at home and at the show to help them succeed. He says, "Maybe that can be a deterrent to some riders. Doing your absolute best no matter how much work it takes. It is the rider discipline ingredient. You have to have it." Dan and Michele Whitney are thrilled with the success their daughter, Daniele, has had with the program. They expressed, "Dean Brown is by far the best non pro coach that Daniele has had the opportunity to work with. He is attentive and works very hard to ensure success. He and Daniele have developed a rapport that works, and she enjoys the time and successes spent under his instruction."

Santa Hill Ranch, a proud NRHA Corporate Partner, feels it is important to give back to the sport and be as involved as possible. According to Santagata, "Staying connected in the community is important." ♦