

20 NRHA TOP TWENTY

PROFESSIONALS

BY HEATHER LOVERIDGE

Cira Baeck, Montenau/Amel, Belgium

SHE'S HALFWAY THROUGH HER SECOND year as an NRHA Professional and enjoying every minute of it. Though Cira Baeck will readily admit there are challenges, working with horses all day long at her family's Eifel Gold Ranch Baeck makes it worth it.

"Having a lot of non pros with me at the horse shows is very new. Finding the balance between training, coaching and sleeping is challenging," she said. "But it's so nice to be able to help them and watch them improve. It's really rewarding and fun!"

"I'm really grateful for all the horse owners that believed in me right from the start, and for my team of assistants and grooms. They gave me the chance to start off well!"

Baeck also enjoys working with her family; her sister Susy runs the breeding operation.

"She does most of the paper work, and that's not really my thing. So I am happy to have her and don't have to bother about anything but training," she said. "It's just great that we can always talk with each other about how we should or shouldn't do things."



"I also depend on my boyfriend and parents. I've learned that family will always tell you the truth. Good or bad, advice is only helpful when it's honest."

Though Baeck doesn't travel to the United States as frequently as she used to, she still visits at least once a year, making an important stop.

"When I'm in Texas I have to eat rib-eye at Clark's in Tioga. I once drove with Susy from Dallas to OKC and we went off to eat at Clark's," she said. "That took us for sure an extra hour but it was worth it!"

CURRENT TOP 20

(As of shows input May 11, 2012)

| | Rider | Earnings |
|----|--------------------|----------|
| 1 | Shawn Florida | \$39,280 |
| 2 | Gennaro Lendi | \$34,988 |
| 3 | Cira Baeck | \$27,471 |
| 4 | Shane Brown | \$21,595 |
| 5 | Rocky Dare | \$21,046 |
| 6 | Sam Smith | \$19,261 |
| 7 | Giuseppe Prevosti | \$15,799 |
| 8 | Bernard Fonck | \$14,651 |
| 9 | Jordan Larson | \$13,402 |
| 10 | Andrea Fappani | \$12,625 |
| 11 | Rudi Kronsteiner | \$11,438 |
| 12 | Thiago Boechat | \$11,317 |
| 13 | Michael McEntire | \$7,738 |
| 14 | Keith Tidmore | \$5,884 |
| 15 | Bill Norwood | \$5,540 |
| 16 | Casey Hinton | \$5,445 |
| 17 | Tracer Gilson | \$5,306 |
| 18 | Sean Johnson | \$5,130 |
| 19 | Dan Huss | \$5,115 |
| 20 | Pierre-Luc Phaneuf | \$4,823 |

Sean Johnson, Kellyville, Oklahoma

HORSES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PART OF SEAN JOHNSON'S LIFE. HE'S A fourth generation horse trainer with a family history steeped in the English world; in fact, his mom is famed three-day eventer Lee Troup. But though Johnson grew up showing eventers and was selected to compete in the Olympics, his career took a different path.

"When I was a kid my mom had a video business and videoed a lot of the world shows and events in the southwest. I got to see Reining and always thought it was really cool," Johnson said. "Back in 2001, I was long listed for the World Games and Olympic team and then had problems with all three of my horses, including one with a career-ending injury. I didn't have anything else to do so I



visited a local reining trainer and sat on the fence until he gave me a job!"

Johnson stayed there about three years, then, in 2005, the NRHA Professional went out on his own, opening Sean Johnson Performance Horses.

"I really enjoy training horses," he said. "We're fortunate in that we have some really nice stock in the barn. The people that built our facility, David and Ann Fell, built a gorgeous facility and it's just a pleasure to go to the barn every morning."

Johnson's wife, Kiera, helps run the business, does modeling/acting and competes as a non pro. She also stays busy with their 8-month-old daughter, AJ.