



Tana Poppino talks with Equine VIP

by Susan Ashbrook, owner Equine VIP

definitely a partnership—I take care of my guys and they take care of me.

Y O U R CAREER IN BARREL RACING HAS BEEN FINANCIALLY REWARDING. AT

WHAT POINT DID YOU REALIZE YOU HAD “MADE IT”?

I don't think you'd call it financially rewarding, I was blessed to win the \$100K at Calgary in 2007, and that has carried me through the past two years while Amigo had to have surgery in 2008, and I broke my ankle in 2009. People see what you win, but they don't see the expense that it costs you to win that money. If you ever think that you've made it, and quit working to get better, that's the moment that your career is over. This is a highly competitive sport and you must earn everything you get.

WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU SHARE FOR WOMEN CONSIDERING FOLLOWING THEIR DREAM?

Be smart, plan ahead financially, but make sure that you are committed because once you jump, you can't look back, you have to work hard and never, never, give up.

HOW SUPPORTIVE HAS YOUR FAMILY BEEN IN YOUR CAREER?

I could not do this without their STRONG support. It was my son Brodie who kept telling me in the first few years when I wanted to quit and go home, “No Mom, you've got to keep going so we can go to the NFR!” Marty, my husband, works hard to help keep me on the road. He is the reason I can live my dream. My parents hauled me to Little Britches and High School rodeos while I was growing up, and Mom still goes with me some. Dad comes when he can. Marty's parents help us feed and help with the housework while I'm gone.

WE UNDERSTAND YOU BELIEVE STRONGLY IN “GIVING BACK”. TELL US SOME OF THE THINGS YOU HAVE DONE IN COMMUNITIES?

I love to encourage others in following their dreams, so I speak at church services, at barrel races, rodeos, and other organizations. I have put on clinics for 4Hers, Girl Scouts and church groups. I help support an equine-assisted therapeutic riding center. I also serve as a director of the Womens' Professional Rodeo Association.

YOUR HORSES ARE UNDER GREAT STRESS DUE TO TRAVEL AND COMPETITION. WHAT KIND OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLIMENTS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

My horses get EquiPride every day with their grain. It's a great all-in-one supplement that is easy to feed and provides lots of nutrition. They also get NutraWound anytime I think they may have strained muscles, tendons or ligaments. It gives their bodies the right stuff to fix the problem. I carry GastroPlus to help with colic, although its purpose is to treat ulcers. I also take NutraWound for myself in the case of an injury, and ImmunoPlus before high stress times like the NFR. Total Health Enhancement has a whole line of great supplements for horses and people, depending on your needs.

HAVE YOU SET YOUR SIGHTS ON ANOTHER GOAL FOR THE FUTURE?

I want to make the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo again this year and in the future. I would like to give both my horses a chance to compete there. Amigo deserves the chance to run there when he is healthy. — A gold (World Champion) buckle would be nice some time, too!

DO YOU HAVE A WEBSITE AND BLOG WE CAN SHARE WITH OUR READERS SO THEY CAN FOLLOW YOU?

Friends and fans can follow me by reading my “Road Report” on my website, www.tanapoppino.com, and we are currently working on a weekly radio program for Spur Radio.

Equine VIP is written by Producer/Host Susan Ashbrook who is also developing a TV series based on her interviews with celebrities and top equestrians. For more information go to www.equineVIP.com

Equine VIP interviews celebrities and equestrian VIPs because “If It's About Horses, We Cover It”.

This month's Equine VIP interview is with Professional rodeo barrel racer Tana Poppino. Tana made a poignant and successful career change from a corporate marketing executive to full time professional rodeo athlete. Tana's brave step toward fulfilling her dream brought her to the 2006 and 2007 Wrangler National Finals as a contestant. After her equine partner, Amigo, suffered an injury requiring surgery and Tana broke an ankle, Tana took some time off. But she's back and riding better than ever! Tana was recently elected as Director of the Prairie State Circuit of the Womens' Professional Rodeo Association. We hope you enjoy reading about Tana's journey!

ONCE YOU MADE THE DECISION TO QUIT YOUR JOB AND JOIN THE RODEO CIRCUIT, DID YOU EVER HAVE DOUBTS?

After a month on the road and I'd only won a couple of thousand, I was broke. I told my husband that I would finish out the next week at the rodeos, then I'd go find a job. I also had a long conversation with God about the whole situation, and He gave me a whole new insight. Although I didn't win a lot that week, things started clicking, and I went another week. We found our “zone” and started winning, and climbed back into the standings, winning enough to qualify for our first Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in third place!

HOW IMPORTANT WAS IT TO FIND THE RIGHT HORSE AS YOUR PARTNER?

That's the critical element, without a great horse, you can't win. I've also learned that it takes perseverance and really knowing your horse to help him stay at the top of his game. I am very blessed to have 15-yr-old Amigo; and now another great horse, 8-yr-old Goose. It is