

ONE 'FORD' THE RECORDS

For every avid horse exhibitor, there's usually a team of supporters waiting at the in gate. Grooming tote and camera at the ready, they cheer their favorite exhibitor to victory or sympathize over a loss. Ringside seats at the 2011 APHA World Championship Show were packed during halter classes by friends, family, coaches and admirers speculating over the next world champion. One such seat was occupied by familiar face Tommy Ford, who celebrated wife Judy's numerous World Show accolades.

For Tommy and Judy Ford, breeding, raising and showing quality Paints is more than just a passion. With an impressive string of halter horses, Judy and trainer Floyd Danley have brought home a bevy of buckles and checks to the Ford's Whitesboro, Texas, home year after year. The Fords stand behind their stock, christening their homebred horses with "FF" at the beginning of their registered names.

At this year's World Show, Judy exhibited the World Champion Amateur Solid Paint-Bred 2-Year-Old & Older Gelding and Amateur Yearling Mare, not to mention earning a reserve finish in Amateur Yearling Geldings. Trainer Floyd Danley netted wins with the couple's horses in Yearling Mares and Solid Paint-Bred 2-Year-Old & Older Geldings, plus third place in Aged Mares & Yearling Geldings.

Waiting in the wings stood Tommy, ready to make his first appearance in the ring at the World Show. Taking the lead shank of FF Shez Irresistable, Tommy strode into the Watt Arena to show in Amateur Aged Mares.

Nerves didn't play a factor in Tommy's showmanship, he explains.

"I had nothing to lose, so I was just going in to have a good time," Tommy said.

"Sheza" knows when to turn on show ring personality, and the striking red dun overo mare gave Tommy her all

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Judy Ford leads the cheering section as FF Shez Irresistable and Tommy Ford are named the world champions.

during the judging. After the exhibitors retired to the rail, the finalists were placed under individual judges.

When the announcer called Tommy's name to the second spot in the first line, Tommy led Sheza with a smile. They earned the top spot on two judges' cards, with another second and a fourth to round out their placings.

Tommy humbly credited the win to Floyd, joking that "the way he gets them ready, Ray Charles could have won with that horse!"

It was a special moment as Tommy and Judy opened the Gist box to peek at his first personal world championship buckle. A throng of fellow halter exhibitors offered endless congratulatory remarks to the couple.

Because the Fords' horses are homebred, Tommy and Judy were especially pleased with this win.

"I was there when Sheza came out," Tommy said with a smile. "This is a good end to it."

—Laura Stevens