



Mark Lyon, of  
Arlington, NE, wins  
the Legends Division  
on three-year-old  
Mustang, Christian

- photo by Leslie Groves -

# WINNER HEAD OVER HEELS IN 2008 EXTREME MUSTANG MAKEOVER

Article courtesy Mustang Heritage Foundation

*In September, the Mustang Heritage Foundation, in cooperation with the BLM, hosted the Fort Dodge Extreme Mustang Makeover for the second year to increase adoptions of mustangs. The event provided the public with the unique opportunity to see how wild mustangs can become trained horses and then participate in a competitive bidding process to adopt one of these treasured animals. This year's event featured more than 300 mustangs that were trained by trainers from across 38 states for 100 days prior to the event.*

**Mark Lyon of Arlington, NE,** took the grand prize at the Fort Dodge Extreme Mustang Makeover Legends Finals, in Fort Worth, Texas. In the event's most difficult level of competition, after falling from his horse mid-performance, Lyon demonstrated that a well-trained horse doesn't always need a rider to win. He captured the \$12,500 top prize and the hearts of thousands watching his performance on Christian, a three-year-old bay mustang gelding.

Well into Lyon's textbook-perfect performance of movements, including deep stops and picture perfect spins, the crowd's heart fell when the saddle slipped in a tight turn. Since the entire focus of the judges was on the mustang's ability, they awarded Christian for his reaction to this unforeseen fall. Judges and famed horse trainer, John Lyons, said, "That was the best part of the whole performance. He did exactly what he

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was trained to do," describing how Christian stood and waited for his rider to get back on. Lyons went on to take the horse through his paces, firing a shooting pistol at balloons and riding through a ring of fire.

A passionate and proud Lyon said, "It's about a horse doing his job. Trainers can get a horse to do something, but when you're off he has free will." Lyon, who has trained numerous mustangs, worked with Christian for a week before he was able to touch him, but he says that mustangs have a "natural agility," which makes them stand out from domesticated horses and learn faster.

The Legend division represented the pinnacle of difficulty for the 2008 Extreme Mustang Makeover. Trainers determined in which category their mustangs would compete based on the progress they believed the former wild horses had made in their 100 days of training. A total of 55 mustangs competed in the **Legends**

**division**, while 45 competed in the intermediate **Idols division** and 14 took on the elementary level, **Stars division**.

Taking the Idols win was **Careen Hammock of College Station, Texas**, and her three-year-old gelding Taz, gathered from Wheeler Pass and earning \$5,000 in prize money.

"Once they trust you, they'll do anything you want," said Hammock of her experience training wild mustangs. "They just have so much heart."

Hammock, who has trained horses for 15 years, says this moving experience with Taz has taught her patience, and she looks forward to doing it again at next year's Extreme Mustang Makeover. This was her first time to show a mustang, and she admits to being a little intimidated walking into the weekend's competition, but Taz showed no nerves as he captivated the crowd at the Fort Worth, Texas, event.

The Stars division was won by **Jennifer Jess** on Bullwinkle, a three-year-old bay gelding gathered from the Deer Lodge Canyon of Nevada. Jess won the \$3,000 top prize of the \$6,000 purse for that division.

A total of \$70,000 was awarded during the three-day run of the show, which ended with the adoption of all competition horses on Sunday, September 21.

**About the Mustang Heritage Foundation**

The mission of the Mustang Heritage Foundation and the goal of the Extreme Mustang Makeover is to increase the adoption of mustangs across the country. The Mustang Heritage Foundation created the Extreme Mustang Makeover event to showcase the recognized value of mustangs through a national training competition.

**About the Bureau of Land Management**

The BLM is responsible for managing 258 million acres of public lands, located mostly in the West. Wild horses and burros roaming public rangelands are managed in a manner consistent with BLM's overall multiple-use mission, as set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. Since 1973, the BLM has placed more than 219,000 horses and burros into private care through adoption. For more information visit [wildhorseandburro.blm.gov](http://wildhorseandburro.blm.gov) or call 866-4MUSTANGS.

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