

No business like horses

By Tanya Jacobson-Gundlock
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As the sun barely begins to rise over a large bright red hip-roofed barn on a farm just outside of Hodgeville, Saskatchewan, two sisters are already hard at work.

The sounds of horses whinnying and spurs clicking, along with the sweet smells of sweat and leather indicate Shantel and Shaleh Berteig have probably been hard at it for a least an hour or two.

The pair established their business, Berteig Performance Horses, out of a dream they have shared for a long time.

The dream all started when 26 year old Shantel, took her first ride at the age of three.

"I was hooked," she says.

Her parents bought the family a pony and from then on it was on to 4 H, local horse shows and mini circuits.

Of a family of four girls (although all four like to ride), Shantel and Shaleh were the two who have made their passion their profession.

"My high school career counsellor told me I should be a mortician," says Shantel, "but we both knew there was nothing else for me. I have always loved horses and I never imagined doing anything else."

After years of showing on the Quarter Horse Circuit, Shantel went off to Olds College to major in, what else, equine science.

For Shantel's younger sister Shaleh, 19, the road to success was similar, but followed a slightly different path. After watching her "big" sister, Shaleh started breaking horses when she was only 12 years old.

She has been a star of the high school rodeo circuit for several years. She won both the 1997 and 1998 High School Rodeo Championships in barrel racing, pole bending and cutting, and in 1998 she was named the High School Rodeo Association's Cowgirl of the Year.

In the last couple of years the pair has teamed up and traveled to Europe to train.

"I needed to go over there to establish myself," says Shantel.



Shaleh and Shantel Berteig have parlayed their passion for training horses into a solid reputation for producing results.

"When we first started, people did not take us seriously - they looked at us as just 'girls' - because our parents didn't really know anything about training horses. Most people didn't think we could produce results."

But with a list of European Championship wins behind them, people take the sisters seriously now.

"Horses have a good energy," says Shantel. And their energy must be contagious; both Shantel and Shaleh ride on average 10-12 horses a day to keep up with their growing business.

One might say there is no time for "horsing" around.

"People think we are party poopers," says Shantel, "they tell us we should be out having fun, but for us, sleep is more impor-

tant."

Right now the sisters are working with just over 40 horses and providing lessons to several riders.

"I love training a horse and then being able to see a new rider get on the horse and make the horse do what I have trained it to do," says Shaleh.

The end goal for the Berteigs is to have a stallion station and indoor riding complex on their farm outside of Hodgeville.

"If you become good enough you can be successful anywhere," says Shantel.

And if passion and sheer determination count for anything, this pair is bound to fulfill their ultimate goal.