

Dancing in the Moonlite

The music met the maneuvers in the new OG&E Coliseum as Moonlite Tonite and Jessicah Keller were named champions of the \$20,000 NRHA Invitational Freestyle Reining, presented by Visit OKC. The duo enjoyed a \$7,025 payday for their efforts tonight at the 6666 NRHA Derby presented by Markel.



Keller selected the song “Y.M.C.A.” by the Village People and was joined by several fellow reiners who danced along as she performed astride. The audience joined in, pumping up the energy in the arena.

“I always like to do something funny or something that everybody knows and can get into,” Keller said, adding that the quality acoustics in the new arena made the event more exciting. “The point of freestyle is to entertain the crowd ... I always like to do something that entertains everyone, something all around fun for everybody.”





Stacked against nine other talented competitors, Keller and Moonlite Tonite, by NRHA Hall of Fame inductee Gunnatrashya, wowed the crowd and pleased the judges to the tune of a 228.5. That feat was made even more impressive because it was the result of a last-minute decision.

"We didn't do very good in the Derby. We missed the finals, so it worked out really well," Keller said.

"He was really good," she continued of her freestyle run. "He didn't know about the people standing out there. He didn't know if they were there to pet him or if he was supposed to dodge them or what he was supposed to do, but he did everything I asked him to do."

Keller's family's Hilldale Farm, an NRHA Million Dollar Owner, is entwined in Moonlite Tonite's story. The 5-year-old stallion's dam, Moonlite Chex, is a daughter of NRHA Hall of Famer Nu Chex To Cash, owned by Hilldale Farm, and Rondas Tio. Keller also showed Moonlite Chex. This win pushed Moonlite Tonite past the \$50,000 mark in NRHA lifetime earnings.

"I'd like to thank [NRHA Professional] Ben Gerst, obviously for training the horse and keeping us ready," Keller said, "my mom because she raised the horse, and Jim Johnson who allowed us to purchase the horse back."