

Jim Lee and Holey Sox at the 1963 National Western Livestock Show, Denver, Colorado.  
Photo by McNerney-Dompierre

*The following vintage article on the great Holey Sox, a 1955 sorrel stallion (94% Foundation, by Leo out of Osage Star Lady), is reprinted from the September 1963 issue of 'Western Horseman'.*

By E. Duane Valenty

A seven year old chestnut Quarter Horse stallion with the easy-to-remember name of Holey Sox, is today the cutting horse the experts rate excellent in performance.

"A Utah cutting horse stole the show," read a typical news item in January. "Holey Sox turned in an outstanding cutting horse performance at the 1963 National Western cutting horse contest in Denver Sunday. The 150 point achievement by Holey Sox is an unheard of high score in such a contest. Thursday, Cutter Bill, the world champion cutting horse of 1962, scored 149 points and experts said they didn't expect to see that good a score again."

Holey Sox, at the moment No 1 in the NCHA Top Ten, is nobody's poor relation in spite of those "holes" in his ox, the peculiar markings from which he got his name.

Long before he became famous, he made news as the "lost horse" when he was put in the barn for safe keeping by a stock show employee after being shipped by owner Woody B Searle to a Pueblo, CO trainer who was to show animals at a Denver show. After turning up missing for three weeks, by a series of coincidences he was found in the right stall where he should have

been all the time, much to his owners relief.

Breeder and oilman Woodey Searle, of Vernal, UT, bought the phenomenal "sox" in 1957 when he was less than two years old, from Fred W Swalley of Ponca City, OK for \$3000. Searle remembers it well.

"In January, 1957, I saw Holey Sox for the first time as they were getting him ready for the sale at the National Western. As we left home for the sale, I told my wife I wouldn't buy any horses in Denver. But when I saw Holey Sox, I had never wanted anything so bad. My wife told me that she had had more out of this life than she had ever hoped for, and for me to go ahead and buy the horse."

Searle was unaware at the sale a few days later that he was bidding against the late B A Skipper, Jr, of Longview, TX, who later became a good friend of the Searle family.

"I bought Holey Sox with the intention of taking him home for the service of my own mares, and to make a calf roping horse for my own use. He being a full brother of Pallo Pete, there was so much talk about putting him on the track that I decided to give him a chance. Holey Sox qualified for AA at both Denver and Ruidoso, and his disposition and friendly manner made him the pet of the racing stable."

It is this disposition, in fact, that makes Holey Sox a truly great horse in his owners opinion,

and not only his rare money making talents.

"he is like no other horse I have seen in my life. Regardless of what you ask him to do, he does his best every time and will try just as many times as you ask him."

This is borne out by rider Austin Beebe. "There is not a mean thing about him. He displayed his gentleness to me one day when I had the misfortune of throwing my hip out while riding him. He made a fast turn to head a calf and caught me off balance. As you know, this is a very painful experience. I pulled him to a stop as I felt I could not move. I called for help but could not make anyone hear me. It was early in the morning and there was not much activity around. I was afraid I would fall off."

With five stallions and one tied to the fence, Beebe was fearful that his mount would get away from him and join them.

"At least 30 minutes passed before I got help and not once did that little horse move. I just kept talking to him and he seemed to know something was wrong. When he was surrounded by people trying to get me off he stood very still and never got excited."

It wasn't until the following spring that Beebe was again able to ride and he took Holey Sox to St George to show him twice. "He placed in both."

From the time he took him to train in the fall of 1959 it was apparent to Beebe that there was outstanding cutting horse material.

"He was the best horse I have ever put a leg over. I was thrilled and amazed every time I got on him. He was willing to work and caught on fast. After I had worked with him for about three weeks

I felt that he was ready to show a little. The first place I took him was to a Quarter Horse Clinic at Spanish Fork, UT. There he was shown and judged by eight or ten people. They all liked him very much."

Those last words tell the story of Holey's busy young life. By February 1960, when Searle received an offer of \$25,000 for him from an Oklahoma horseman, he turned it down because "he seemed like a member of the family." Not long ago and for the same reason, he turned down \$65,000.

There was no intention at first of training this fast horse for cutting. After qualifying for AA at both Denver and Ruidoso, Searle had him trained by Clarence Kaiser, and on a trip to Alameda, CA, Holey Sox came down with pneumonia.

"I sent him to California and had him brought home. I hadn't wanted to run him in the first place and was ready to bring him home at the slightest excuse. I didn't realize at the time what it would have meant to run him AAA. There has never been any doubt in my mind but that he could have done it. Holey Sox is not a tall horse by any means and there is quite a bit of talk about different people who thought they had horses who could run faster than he."

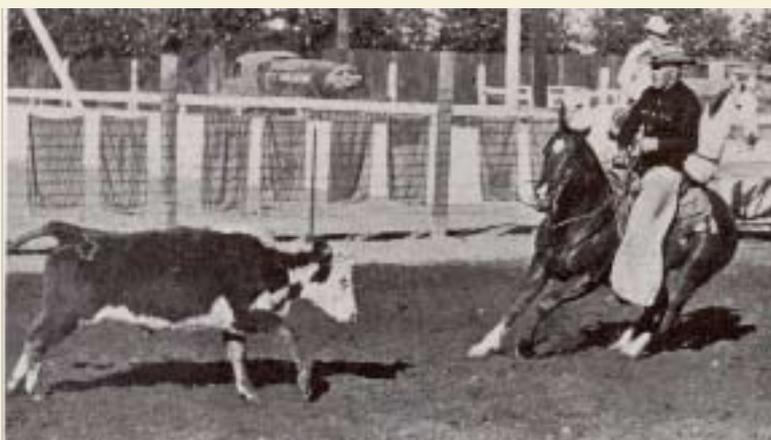
One such horse was a Thoroughbred called Bing, owned by Roy Showalter. The two were matched for \$4000 for one-quarter of a mile, to be run during the Vernal Race Meet in June 1958. Holey Sox was trained for the match by Lawrence Allen from Vernal, while Kay

But it was a bad time, while it lasted, as Searle will testify.

"I would stand with my arms around his neck and talk to him...it took 75 stitches on the inside of his hip and 50 on the outside...I gave him 10 cc of antibiotics every day for a month and had him tied to both sides in his stall. I would take him out and exercise him every day. Holey Sox never did limp, nor was there much swelling, and he has never favored his left leg at all."

After keeping Sox at home the remainder of the year, during the summer of 1959 Searle was again roping calves and steers and running barrels on him. "In the barrel races, he never ran out of the money."

Austin Beebe took him on for cutting horse training, although his owner had no idea he'd soon have a top winner on his hands. In October 1962, Jim Lee took over after first trying to buy Holey



Holey Sox with Austin Beebe in the saddle at Phoenix, Ariz., in 1961. Photo by Sierra Studio

Sox and finding he wasn't for sale. Showing him soon after at Dallas; Shreveport, LA; Washington, DC; and Las Vegas, Jim then had a few quiet weeks to ride him and get acquainted, and "he began to try a lot harder."

The star of 1963 saw Holey Sox at Little Rock place in the Top Ten of the nation, followed by outstanding performances at Odessa, Denver, Fort Worth, El Paso, San Antonio, and Houston.

Holey Sox was really in the news. "The 'woeful waif' of the National Western a few years ago," said the Rocky Mountain News, "had cutting horse fanciers breathless when judges awarded him 150 points for the job in the Coliseum Arena...an unheard of score in the cutting horse contest."



**A true Versatile Foundation Quarter Horse - Holey Sox earned an AQHA Superior Cutting, and a race ROM as well as points in Halter, Calf Roping, Barrel Racing, Reining, Trail, Cowhorse, Dally Heading, Pole Bending, and Western Pleasure, for a total of 154.50 AQHA points. He also won \$12,748.10 in NCHA.**

**Holey Sox sired 3 AQHA Race ROMs, 9 Performance ROMs, 1 AQHA Champion, 2 Superior Performance, and 8 Halter point earners. He also sired NCHA Superior Cutting, a World Champion, and \$140,669.18 in NCHA earnings.**



Going 330 yards in AA time, Holey Sox won this race at Centennial. Photo by Ralph Morgan

Conyers from Hayden, CO rode him.

"There was quite a bit of talk on the outcome of the race, and a lot of money changed hands," says Searle. "We were running on a circle track and Sox had never run a turn. When the horses were ready to leave the paddock, I told Kay, 'I want to win this race, but want to win it fair, so there can be no kickbacks.'" Holey Sox broke on top and there was never any doubt as they came up the backstretch. Kay stood up in her stirrups and looked back over her shoulder, and brought him in on an easy run."

The rest of that year Searle began to rope calves and steers on Holey Sox and to run barrels. An unfortunate accident to Sox in August, when he backed into the corner of a rafter, severely injured his left hip, incapacitating him for a time but apparently having no lasting ill effects except for a scar he still wears today.