

FULL CIRCLE FOR SYLVESTER

STORY BY LIZZIE IWERSEN

Dropping the gavel at \$60,000 for the nine-year-old black gelding SR Lil Cat Olena meant more than just money exchanging hands to auctioneer and CHS owner Steve Friskup. The sale exemplified all of what Friskup aims to achieve with his sales: great breeders consigning nice horses and those horses ending up in great hands.

The 2013 black gelding called Sylvester was bred by Don and Teresa Martin of Vernon, Texas. He is by the Martin's late stallion Little Catolena, who was a National Cutting Horse Association Open futurity and derby finalist. Forty-year breeders, the Martins have been loyal Clovis Horse Sale consigners for decades.

"All of our colts have ended up in good hands," Theresa says. "So that's the reason we keep going back. Not only do they sell good, and we like Steve, but our colts get the opportunity to succeed and that's what you strive for as a breeder."

The Martins consigned the black yearling colt to the sale in 2014 where he was purchased by Tripp Townsend of Earth, Texas, much to the delight of the Martins.

"The day Tripp bought him, we were very excited," says Martin. "We figured he'd bring him back to show in the futurity."

Tripp did in fact bring the colt back to town at the age of three to compete in the CHS Futurity, a cow



Autumn (Townsend) Benavides showing SR Lil Cat Olena, Sylvester, in the CHS Ranch Horse Competition. (Photography: Devin Sisk Photography)

horse competition open to horses purchased through the sale.

Friskup recalls Tripp's win.

"That's why we have the futurity. When a guy buys a horse based on potential, and then we get to see what they can do with the potential, that's our goal," he says. "Tripp always does a good job. I remember that black horse because he was exceptional. And I loved getting to sell him again, years later."

Along with showing, Tripp used Sylvester outside to doctor wheat pasture cattle at his yearling operation in Earth. When the horse was 6, he passed the reins over to daughter, Autumn.

"My dad hadn't really roped much on him in the arena. So when I got him, that is what I did, I started

him on the head side," Autumn recalls. "One of the first World Series I took him to, we qualified for Vegas, so we went out there and came pretty close to having some luck. But I had a good deal of success on him a lot of places I took him. He taught me a whole lot more than I taught him, that's for sure."

With a good one like Sylvester, it's often a tough decision to sell or keep the horse. So when Tripp advised Autumn to start thinking of what sale they were going to consign Sylvester to, it was bittersweet.

"I was not on board with selling him at first, because this is the best horse I have ever had. He was in his prime and I was winning on him," she says. "But ultimately, those are the reasons I decided to

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sell him, he was at that point where his value was highest.”

The Townsends decided Clovis Horse Sale at Levelland was the best fit for Sylvester. Autumn was pleased with decision.

“As far as horse sales go, that was the best opportunity to showcase my horse,” she says. “It was ideal, honestly. I showed him in the ranch horse competition, then I headed on him and Bubba Garcia heeled on him. So I got to show pretty much every aspect of what he can do.”

Friskup’s sales are designed to provide sellers an opportunity to show their horse’s skill sets and also give buyers a chance to see a horse at work. The format has proved successful for several years now. Autumn says without Friskup’s sale format, she most likely would’t have had such great results.

With Friskup back on the mic, the black gelding went through the ring again, eight years later.



Autumn (Townsend) Benavides working a cow on Sylvester in the CHS Ranch Horse Competition. (Photography: Devin Sisk Photography)

“That was a pretty cool deal that we bought him at that sale and then, eight years later after my dad and I both rode him and made him the horse he is, we sent him back through the same program.”

Though not in attendance, the Martins watched the sale results, knowing Sylvester had been consigned.

“We have followed him all along since the Townsends bought him,” Teresa says. Watching one that you’ve raised, I was so proud. His sire, Lil Cat Olena, was like our world when we had him. We lost him in 2015 in a tragic accident. So to see his offspring out there doing good, selling good, that meant a lot to us.”

Topping the sale at \$60,000 (along with Wilson Cattle’s gelding Boonshesacat) Autumn says the paycheck is more than just money in the bank. It’s a kickstart for the opportunity to keep training horses.

“I feel very blessed by the opportunity this horse gave me,” she says. “I didn’t know what would happen but I knew he was an

awesome horse and knew he could potentially top the sale. It creates a lot of opportunity for me and gives me the chance to keep doing this, buy more and do the same thing. I feel very blessed. It was amazing.”

Sylvester’s new owners run a cow-calf operation in Roswell, New Mexico. Autumn happily says, “I get the feeling he is going to live a pretty good life there.”

And while the big black horse now blesses a new family, his original family continues to feel his impact.

“As a small breeder it meant so much to be a part of a special horse’s life, one that you’ve raised and seen go on to be a great horse for his owners.”

To Friskup, a man who has seen tens of thousands of horses pass under his auction block, the story of Sylvester will always stand out in his mind.

“This has been our vision since the inception of the futurity program; Helping breeders obtain the full potential of their product,” Friskup says. “And don’t you just love it when a vision comes to fruition? I sure do.” U



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