

Legendary Barrel Horse Gills Bay Boy, aka "Scamper" Passes

Courtesy Charmayne James' website (www.charmaynejames11.com), compiled by Ann Bleiker

Gills Bay Boy, known the world over as "Scamper," passed away peacefully to greener pastures on the morning of July 4, 2012. Perhaps appropriately, he chose the date of a joyous holiday to leave this earth—a day of celebration fit for the life of a horse that was, in and of himself, a gift. Foaled in 1977, Scamper found a home in James' barn in 1982 after she paid \$1,100 for what some called a vile-tempered animal after throwing one previous owner and putting him in the hospital. Although she was warned by her father, Charlie James, Charmayne was never scared of him and together they became the most iconic duos in the equine industry, dominating the barrel racing ranks from the early 1980s until his retirement in 1993. The gelded son of Gills Sonny Boy out of the mare Drapers Jay was in good health to the end, immaculately cared for by Charmayne, his constant companion and one of the most highly decorated rodeo athletes in ProRodeo history.

"What a gift he was," says James. "It's sad that he is gone but what life he had. It's something to be celebrated."

Words fail to adequately describe Scamper's career but amazing, incredible and stoic all come to mind. Scamper is easily defined by his performance record, which was perfect. Achieving 10 consecutive world championships (1984-1993) in the Women's Professional Rodeo Association, and carried James to six National Finals Rodeo barrel racing average titles (1984, 1986-

87, 1989-90 and 1993). The duo won an incredible 10 RodeoHouston titles and countless circuit and major rodeo championships on their way to earnings of well over \$1 million. James was 14 when they won their first world championship and he was 7. Scamper earned multiple American Quarter Horse Association Horse of the Year Honors in barrel racing and in 1992 became the first and only barrel horse to be inducted into the ProRodeo Hall of Fame. He was featured in countless publications over the years, including *Sports Illustrated*.

Together Scamper and Charmayne defined an era in rodeo and their famous round-winning bridleless ride perhaps best epitomizes the relationship between horse and rider; a one-in-a-million partnership that was loyal and true to the end. Defying all odds, the unassuming bay raced his way into the hearts of millions, taking a shy ranch girl from Clayton, N.M. with him. From feedlot pony to equine legend, Scamper's conformation, attitude and mental and physical toughness endeared him to the public and fellow competitors. His smooth-as-glass style coupled with incredible speed made him a formidable horse for the competition to face.

Scamper was 35 when he was laid to rest at the ranch in Boerne, Texas.



Tribute to Scamper

Comments from other's in the rodeo business about Scamper's impact on the sport



Marlene Eddleman McRae, 1983 World Champion Barrel Racer riding Dutch

"I never felt like Charmayne and I was competing against each other but that the competition was between two great horses. Charmayne's uncle, Frank Brown, actually shod both Dutch and Scamper and Scamper was raised in Colorado at a place near my parents so I knew his bloodlines and knew he was capable of performing.

"Charmayne definitely had a special bond with him, just like I did with Dutch. Finding that perfect match was crucial in their overall success. The other thing that always amazed me was how much Scamper loved the trailer. It was nothing back in those days to travel to 100-plus rodeos and Scamper just seemed to endure the miles better than most and was a big reason he was able to be so competitive for so many years. Also they were so tough to beat at Houston and Reno with the big arenas giving them a jump on everyone else in the standings. They were fun to watch."

Jimmie Munroe, WPRA President and 1975 World Champion Barrel Racer

"The barrel racing world will always be in debt to the dynamic duo of Charmayne and Scamper for the recognition they brought to our sport. Many people became barrel racing fans as they watched the pair win a record 10 consecutive World Championships. A feat that I feel sure will never be repeated. I think Pam Minick summed it up best when she said "what a ride." It truly was and thank you Charmayne and Scamper for allowing so many of us to experience it with you."

Kristie Peterson, four-time World Champion Barrel Racer (1994, 1996-98)

"I am glad I got to run with them to see him run as he was just amazing to watch. Just seeing him in the stall, he had the look. It was unbelievable then to watch them win 10 in a row but to think back now it is beyond amazing. Scamper was lucky to find Charmayne and they were a perfect match. I am not sure anyone else would have had the same results. I never liked it when people would say he got outran as I felt he never got outran, he just got old. Plus it never got old watching them after 10 years as we were always in awe watching them. There will never be another like him."



Brittany Pozzi, two-time World Champion Barrel racer (2007, 2009)

"I didn't grow up in a rodeo family, so I didn't watch Scamper as much as others in this business. However, after learning their story, I can say it is truly unbelievable what they accomplished. They say records are made to be broken but Charmayne and Scamper's record of 10 consecutive will never be broken. That record will stand for ever. Scamper was an unbelievable animal."

Kenneth Springer, WPRA photographer who captured the famous bridleless image of Scamper

"As they came into the arena that night at the NFR, you could tell when they were going around the first barrel that something wasn't right with the bridle. Charmayne just took it one barrel at a time trying to keep the bit in his mouth and when he spit the bit out on the third I knew there was only one chance to get that shot coming home with no bridle. That was back before auto focus or digital or any of the things we have now on the cameras so there was some pressure there trying to get that perfect shot showing the bridle around his neck. At the time, I knew it was a big deal getting that photo but as the years have passed, I realize just how special that moment was. I am glad I was able to capture it.

"Watching them run at the Astrodome in Houston, I just remember how loud the crowd would get when they turned the third barrel and it would just become deafening. They weren't from Houston but they were definitely celebrities down there. Scamper was a great athlete and I admired that Charmayne never wavered on her approach and as a result he got stronger and faster run after run when multiple runs were involved. They were a great team. They were in some very pressure packed situations but Charmayne never ruined it for him by making a mistake on her part. She brought out the best in him."



Kristie Peterson and Bozo captured the world title in 1994 following Charmayne James and Scamper's record 10 consecutive world titles (1984-1993).

Hadley Barrett, 2011 WPRA Announcer of the Year and TV commentator during Charmayne and Scamper's record title run

"The bridleless run is definitely a fond memory of mine and really showed the bond between horse and rider. I always felt that Scamper overshadowed Charmayne but she was just as responsible for their success as I am not sure anyone else would have had the same result with that horse. He could be compared to a prize fighter that would take some hits (getting outran sometimes) but would always come back to deliver the final blow. They gained a lot of national attention and what they did is a great part of American history. They truly lived the American dream and proved that no matter where you come from if you have the determination and drive you can do great things."



The famous bridleless photo of Scamper and Charmayne James by Kenneth Springer