



## Cheryl White

Race Hall of Fame

No matter the pedigree, breeder, owner, or trainer, winning or losing a race depends ultimately on how well the jockey can ride an Appaloosa down the straightaway or around a turn. While most owners and trainers understand this necessity, the Appaloosa racing industry, has not, until recently, sufficiently recognized jockeys through their nomination and election to the Racing Hall of Fame.

Cheryl White was a multiple award-winning Appaloosa jockey. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, her father and former jockey trained Thoroughbreds and taught her to ride. Although only 18 years old, she started riding Thoroughbreds in 1971 but as she said, “didn’t exactly tear up the track.” As we’ll see, “tearing up the track” would come later, and at the big-time tracks on the 10-county and highly competitive California County Fair Circuit.

Cheryl graduated in the top ten percent of her high school class and, with a college scholarship, planned to major in mathematics and teach algebra—a career far removed from her love of horses and racing. As most folks growing up with horses will tell you, you can leave the “farm” but the ole “farm” won’t leave you. So too with Cheryl. After vacationing in California in 1973, the horse-bug must have won out, because she stayed and, in 1974, embarked on a 13-year career riding racehorses in at least five breeds, although Appaloosas were her favorite.

Cheryl rode her first Appaloosa in 1974, competing at only two of the 10-county California Fair Circuit tracks. A year later, she raced the full compliment of tracks, running May to November. Consider the year—1974—a young, Afro-American, female, starting a racing career in a sport dominated in all phases by males. It

was not exactly a “level playing field” for succeeding. As the record will show however, succeed she did—and at a level which was impressive by any standard.

Cheryl may well have been the first female to jockey Appaloosas, clearly was the first Afro-American female to race and win riding an Appaloosa, and was the first female to win the ApHC’s Jockey of the Year award. While these “firsts” are noteworthy and historic in their own right, the more precise record of her racing career shows why she is worthy of being in the Racing Hall of Fame. 1977 started what became Cheryl’s long record of achievement. She was both California’s and the ApHC’s Leading Jockey with Most Wins, 17.

- 1980 and 1982, tied for 2nd, ApHC Leading Jockey, 21 Wins.
- 1983-ApHC Jockey of the Year, 34 Wins, 26 of them on the California circuit.
- 1984-ApHC Jockey of the Year, 24 Wins.
- 1985-ApHC Jockey of the Year, 25 Wins
- 1986-tied for 3rd, 19 Wins.
- 1983/84/85, also Leading Jockey on the California Fair Circuit.

Riding on the California circuit for 13 years, Cheryl was often the All-Around Leading Jockey (all breeds) at Individual Fair Race Meets. Although she won more races riding Appaloosas than Quarter Horses, Thoroughbreds, and a few races on Paints and Arabs, her overall Life-Time record of wins, all breeds, is staggering—750 total races won.

A Leading Jockey has to have ridden great horses for great trainers. Consider only a select few of the more noteworthy trainers for whom she rode: Don Collins, Van Walker, Ralph Eisman, Ray/Ruby Thomas. And the award-winning horses, although she was not the only jockey to ride them: Double R Pleasure, life-time earnings of \$107,346; Time Table, life-time earnings of \$120,720; Mr. Slic, life-time earnings of \$83,255; Granite Girl, life-time earnings of \$77,501; and other winning Appaloosas—Mr. Dad, Host Flies Ky, Double Quick, Another Double, Hombre Mio, and Southern Pride.

To say Cheryl White competed with and excelled against the boys is an understatement. While outstanding female jockeys are rather commonplace in today’s world of horseracing, she faced and overcame the challenges of her times, and her contributions to the industry and to all the jockeys that would follow were groundbreaking. Cheryl was more than the first—she excelled and set new standards, making her a true pillar of the breed.