



45th Annual UTM Rodeo

"One for the record books"

The 2013 UTM Rodeo was truly one for the record books, with attendance records set each of the three nights of the rodeo and the largest 3 day attendance total in the long history of the annual rodeo. For the 8th year in a row the UT Martin Rodeo was selected as "Rodeo of the Year" by the Ozark Region. Coach Luthi brought home "Coach of the Year" honors and John Alley's horse, Rodeo Red, also won "2013 Horse of the Year".

Coach Luthi reflected on the 45th Annual Spring Rodeo saying, "I am so thankful for all of the help

and support we get in putting on our home rodeo. So many people have an important part in our success and we could not pull this off without everyone of them"

Each year the rodeo team selects an honorary "Team Captain". This is awarded to the individual the team members believe has really supported the team over the years and help has helped out in many "behind the scenes" capacities. This year the team voted Carla Vowell as the well deserved recipient.

The large crowds got to see some fantastic action from the cowboys



Micayla Gray

and cowgirls competing in the arena. Clay Mitchell earned the men's All-Around title and Micayla Gray placed second in the women's All-Around.

In the bareback riding Tyler Waltz turned in two great rides to place second in the average. Ty Hughston won the average in the saddle bronc riding and Allen Foster ended up fourth.

Two cowgirls placed in the breakaway average, with Natalie Fletcher placing fifth and Micayla Gray finishing sixth. Tie down



Clay Mitchell heading & Lane Mitchell healing

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Spring Recap & CNFR Qualifiers

The UT Martin Men's team won the Ozark Regional Title and thus qualified for the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming. This is the 40th consecutive year the men's team has qualified for the CNFR. Two cowgirls from the women's team also earned berths at the Finals. A total of 13 team members will be making the trip out west. Anyone who finished in the top three in the regional standing earns an automatic bid to the CNFR.

According to Coach Luthi, "We have had a really good year so far. Like always, we have had some ups and downs but our team has worked at keeping a good attitude. They have all tried to learn from mistakes and continue to improve and progress. All I can ask for is to keep that same attitude at the College Finals. There are a lot of opportunities still out there. Good Lord willing, we will be blessed with some good opportunities at the CNFR and will take advantage of them. I'm excited for all the team members we have competing. Please keep us in your prayers."

Team members all ranked in the top-10 in the nation in their respective events are Adcock and Alley (first in team roping), Waltz (second in bareback), Lummus (sixth in steer wrestling), Walker (sixth in team roping), Alley (seventh in all-around cowboy), Clay Mitchell (eighth in team roping), Lane Mitchell (ninth in team roping) and Hughston (ninth in saddle bronc). The men's team finished the regular season in second

place nationally. However, all points are wiped clean at the CNFR and national championships are based on results at the College Finals only.

"We have a great group headed to the College Finals this year," declared Coach Luthi. "I believe they are all capable of big things out there. I feel our main focus needs to be the same as it has been all year; work on taking each animal and each opportunity we are given and striving to make the best run or ride we can with what we have drawn."

Men's Regional Standings

Men's All-Around: John Alley – 1, Ben Walker – 2, Jordan Thrasher – 3, Lane Mitchell – 5

Bareback: Tyler Waltz – 1

Saddle Bronc Riding: Ty Hughston – 1, Jacob Dagenhart – 2, Allen Foster – 5

Bulls: Matt Smith – 6

Tie Down Roping: Jordan Thrasher – 2, Ben Walker – 3, Lane Mitchell – 8

Steer Wrestling: Will Lummus – 1, Jordan Thrasher – split 2, Robert Joyce – split 2, John Alley – 6

Team Roping – Heading: John Alley – 1, Ben Walker – 2, Clay Mitchell – 3

Team Roping – Heeling: Clark Adcock – 1, Lane Mitchell – 3

Women's Regional Standings

Breakaway Roping: Natalie Fletcher – 3

Barrel Racing: Mary Francis Gorsuch – split 3, Lauren Wagner – 5, Nealy Dalton – 8

Newsletter Archives

If you are interested in reading past rodeo team newsletters, please go to www.utmsports.com and click rodeo. On the right side click on this symbol



They will all be available there.

The CNFR will begin on Sunday, June 9th and continue through Saturday, June 15. There will be regular updates on the UTM Rodeo facebook page. You can also find articles at www.utmsports.com and click on rodeo.

Sankey Rodeo Schools



The Sankey School staff are all focused on helping a student improve in the saddle bronc riding.

A common question asked each year during the rodeo is “How do the cowboys learn to ride those wild and untamed bucking horses and bulls?” For the past 15 years, Sankey Rodeo Schools has been kicking off “Rodeo Week” with their rough stock school the weekend before the UTM College Rodeo. It is headed by Lyle Sankey, one of only four men to qualify for the National Finals Rodeo in Bare Back, Saddle Bronc, and Bull Riding. He has also won the Bull Riding Average twice at the National Finals Rodeo, riding nine bulls each of those times. As a pro rodeo contestant, coach, and mentor, Lyle has

helped countless athletes enter the exciting world of big time rodeo. As an author, lecturer and businessman Lyle is also a noted motivational speaker. He has brought his message to city Chamber of Commerce groups, sports banquets, sports team meetings, and the Billy Graham Crusade. Lyle was also one of the featured individuals in Joe White’s Promise Keeper’s presentation “Real men standing for Christ in the real world.”

The rough stock school is 3 days of intense training, drills, and of course getting on bucking horses and bulls. Students vary greatly in age and experience.

Some are young cowboys looking for a safe (as can be expected) environment to try their hand at riding bucking stock. Some are more seasoned veterans looking to fine tune their skills before a summer full of rodeos begins. For others it is a weekend adventure, something they have always wanted to try.

The first day begins with a lot of enthusiasm and a bit of apprehension. Learning to control your emotions and focus on the task at hand is one of the first lessons to absorb. Safety is always paramount, so they start with a check of equipment, going over basic safety instructions and chute routine procedures. A unique aspect of the Sankey School’s is they will provide all the equipment needed for training free to their students during the school as part of their program package. No one else in the sport provides that bonus. The students split into events: bareback, saddle

bronc, bulls, and clown/ bull fighting. Each group rotates through drills, getting on bucking stock and watching video of their rides. The staff gives a lot of immediate encouragement and individual instruction to help each rider learn to improve their skills.

Day two is highlighted by unlimited bucking stock to get on! This is when conditioning is vital as the students begin to fatigue and get sore. Learning to deal with some soreness and minor

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Coach Luthi is all smiles as he sees a student make progress in the bareback riding.

Sankey Rodeo Schools cont.

injuries is just part of learning to become a rough stock rider.

The final morning starts with more drills and getting on stock. After lunch students participate in the highlight of the weekend, the “Ride Off”. The students enter just like a real rodeo and are drawn an animal to compete on. This is the time for students to put into practice all they have learned throughout the weekend. There is a lot of energy going into this last event and lots of applause and cheering as students show off their improved riding skills.

“Sankey Rodeo Schools have been huge to me”, commented Coach Luthi, “not only since I have been coaching, but when I competed in rodeos as well. Helping the Sankey team with these rodeo schools always helps me and our team members that volunteer their time, to get back to basics and learn more about their events. Along with being a great fundraiser, the Sankey Rodeo Schools are a win-win situation for us.”

If you are interested in learning more about Sankey Rodeo Schools, check out their website at www.sankeyrodeo.com or like them on Facebook.



Learning to compete in the arena and then off to watch video of the ride with the Sankey staff.

45th Annual Rodeo cont.



Jordan Thrasher

roper Jordan Thrasher had two quick times to place second in the average. Lane Mitchell was fourth and Ben Walker ended up sixth.

Clay Mitchell won the short go in the steer wrestling and finished as the event champion. Robert Joyce put together two fast runs and finished second in the average.

In the goat tying, Micayla Gray placed in her second event finishing fifth in the average. Two barrel racers placed in the average with Mary Francis Gorsuch splitting first and Nealy Dalton coming in fourth.

The team ropers had another big rodeo with Clay and Lane Mitchell claiming the championship buckle. Will Lummus placed second in the heeling and Ben Walker was third in the heading.

UTM Rodeo Schedule 2013

College National Finals Rodeo in Casper, Wyoming – June 9 - 15

Keep up with UT Martin Rodeo results at
www.utmsports.com



Betsy Ross Foundation Donates \$100,000 For Scholarships To UTM Rodeo Program

During his lifetime, Dave Wilcox changed the lives of many UT Martin rodeo team cowboys and cowgirls. He went out of his way to help those around him and through his charitable foundation, he will change the lives of many more in the years to come. Wilcox's legacy will live on with a generous \$100,000 pledge from his Betsy Ross Foundation to the University of Tennessee at Martin rodeo teams.

Wilcox, a fixture on the local rodeo scene before passing away in 2011, founded and was board chairman of Allegro Fine Foods in nearby Paris, Tenn., and established the Betsy Ross Foundation in 1987. The foundation, named in memory of his late wife, helped send Tennessee and Kentucky residents to college over the last quarter-century.

This donation is a one-of-a-kind offering that is the largest gift given to rodeo in UT Martin history. The Betsy Ross Foundation presented a check for the Wilcox Family Rodeo Scholarship, which will annually give \$20,000 for scholarships over a five-year span.

"We are so fortunate to have community leaders supporting our rodeo program," UT Martin Chancellor Tom Rakes said. "This gift is a major benefit for our riders for years to come."

Head rodeo coach John Luthi came to UT Martin in 1997 and quickly developed a friendship with Wilcox.

"Dave was the most kind-hearted man I ever met and was very supportive – he would do anything he could to help us out," Luthi said. "This kind of commitment is a solid base to build on

and does a lot for recruiting. What a blessing."

Wilcox valued family as much as anything, and that is evident by the board members of the Betsy Ross Foundation. The chairperson is Julie Williams, Dave's middle daughter, who saw her own daughter Catlin attend UT Martin. The secretary is Ruth Conroy, Dave's youngest daughter who attended UT Martin in the 1980s. The board also includes Mary Lou Reed (Dave's oldest daughter), John Fuqua (president of Allegro) and Thomas Harrison (executive vice president of Allegro, UT Martin graduate).

Fuqua and Conroy were instrumental in the gift process.

"What Ruth and I have done is one of the true blessings in life – executing

a plan to remember people like that," said Fuqua, who has been at Allegro for 30 years and was Wilcox's first employee at Allegro. "Dave had such a genuine appreciation of character and work ethic for a cowboy or cowgirl. He was always partial to those who raised cattle, had a genuine respect for the equipment and an appreciation for farm animals."

Conroy also echoed Fuqua's sentiments of her late father.

"I came to UT Martin around 1983 and was coming to rodeos with my father even before then," Conroy said. "Dave was a very unique person and was very caring towards others."

Among many of the lives Wilcox touched was David Pruitt's. The public relations officer for the UT Martin rodeo Booster Club, Pruitt was a member of the rodeo team at UT Martin before graduating in 1993.

"Dave gave me the confidence to come back to school and finish my degree," Pruitt said. "He would always be there for you anytime you needed him – no questions asked."

Fuqua, whose stepson Alan Chase played football at UT Martin in 2000-01, knew that the gift would carry on Wilcox's heritage for many years to come.

"We are only here a short period of time and if you can continue to help people after you're gone, you're pretty successful then," Fuqua said. "If you help a kid get an education, you help them for the rest of their lives."

Alumni Spotlight

In this newsletter we catch up with former UT Martin cowboy **Bret McMillion**. He graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor Degree in University Studies. Bret still lives in the area and owns his own construction company called McMILLION CONSTRUCTION, LLC. They mainly build houses, but construct some industrial and commercial buildings too. (the website is www.buildinghomesforyou.com).

Not only is his business growing, so is his family. Bret says he has “a wonderful wife from Blytheville, Arkansas named Jamie and two sons that I am crazy about.” Their oldest, Carter James, is three. Cason Andrew is the newest addition to the McMillion family and is just over one month old. He has also trains and runs in triathlons.

While Bret was at UT Martin he was a true all-around cowboy working both ends of the arena. He was the Ozark Region reserve all-around winner three times and captured two steer wrestling championship titles. Bret was also a talented rough stock rider, competing in the bareback and saddle bronc riding. He qualified for the College National Finals Rodeo all four of his years on the UTM rodeo team. In 1998 he made the short go in the bareback riding, finishing 12th in the nation. During the 2001 CNFR he split 5th in the first and second rounds of the steer wrestling.

This is what Bret remembers about his time at UTM. “I miss everybody at Martin. Leaving there was like leaving your family. What a great supportive and fun place it is. I still use Coach Luthi’s goal setting material in my business.” He mentions, “I have not even ridden a horse since 2004 or so. I like being competitive in my business these days.”

Bret was an integral part of the success of the rodeo team in the late 90’s and early 2000’s. Coach Luthi recalls, “Bret was not only a great athlete but he worked hard at being the best he could be. It is no surprise to me this same attitude and work ethic has helped Bret to be successful in his business today.”



Carter, Jamie and Bret McMillion



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Don't EVER give up!