

# UT Martin Rodeo News

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT MARTIN

September 2016



## College National Finals Rodeo

The UTM Rodeo team headed west to Casper, Wyoming to compete at the College National Finals Rodeo with a team loaded with experience. Each qualifier had previously competed at the CNFR at least once.

The team had a solid week of competition and was continually ranked in the top 10 in the country through the first 3 rounds. UTM placed 4 men in the championship short go on Saturday night: Tanner Phipps in the bareback riding, Ben Walker and Slade Bronson in the tie down roping and Lane Mitchell heeling in the team roping.

According to Coach Luthi, "4 of the 5 men we brought to the CNFR made the short go, but unfortunately we didn't have a good night. We had a good but not great finals. The men's team finished 13th in the nation, just out of the top 10."



Above: UTM heeler, Lane Mitchell, again catches two feet at the CNFR. Photo courtesy of Hubbell Photography.



Top: Tanner Phipps starts a great spur ride on "Windwalker" of Mo Betta Rodeo Company; middle: Ben Walker again ropes fast to place in the round; bottom: Slade Bronson makes a quick catch in the tie down roping at the CNFR. Photos courtesy of Hubbell Photography.





Above: UTM Rodeo's 2016 CNFR team; top: Lane Mitchell, Ben Walker, Tanner Phipps; bottom: Coach Luthi, Slade Bronson, Natalie Fletcher, Nealey Dalton, Douglas Rich, Coach Davis. Photo courtesy of Hubbell Photography.



Above: Nealey Dalton and her horse, "Miss Mango", make a super run at the College Finals; Top-left: Douglas Rich heeling for Ben Walker; bottom-left: Natalie Fletcher competes at the College Finals in the breakaway roping. Photos courtesy of Hubbell Photography.



# Alumni Spotlight

By Zak Danison September 2016

My time at UTM was unique in many ways. First of all, I was fortunate enough to have been offered the graduate assistantship for the rodeo team. I was so thankful to have the opportunity to earn a masters degree that I doubled up on my courses my senior year at the University of Rio Grande. It was an amazing opportunity and worth all of the extra work in my eyes.

The funny thing is, I never even considered being able to rodeo for the team. I didn't know that it was even possible. I had gone to college rodeos with a friend of mine and we did it independently for the last two years of undergrad...just having fun and rodeoing with people our age. I had a blast but never really considered going to a school that had an organized team. I can remember talking on the phone to Coach Luthi a few months prior to moving down to Martin. He found out that I had two years of eligibility left...that's when I realized that I would be able to represent the team AND be the grad assistant AND earn an MBA! I was ecstatic!

When I got down to Martin (a few weeks before classes began) coach already had a few projects for me.

What seemed to be a mountain of manure from the past year needed to be hauled away. And when that was finished, there were stalls that needed cleaned and filled in with dirt. Welcome to UTM! Ha! Well, I wasn't scared of hard work but it wasn't exactly what I pictured for my first responsibility as the grad assistant. I didn't blink an eye...I was thankful to be there!

I went down there expecting to get an education in the traditional sense. But I ended up with so much more than an MBA. I ended up learning life lessons that stick with me to this day, thanks to Coach Luthi. He made such an impression on me that I now find myself thinking of him almost on a daily basis. Sometimes it's something simple like twisting bailing wire on a gate or sweeping out the barn. But more often, I think of him when I use one of the many life lessons he offered during team meetings or just in the way he approached his life.

One of his sayings that made a huge impression on me is "life is choices, not chances." I try to remind myself of this on a regular basis and the older I get, the more I see it ringing true. Coach didn't just throw these



*Above: Zak making another winning run in the tie down roping.*

sayings around; he lived them every day. I watched him make a list of things to do every morning even though he knew the first two or three things were going to be the same every day...it didn't matter. He was disciplined and regimented even with the smallest of responsibilities.

In my two years there I never heard him say a single negative word about anybody. I saw him work from sun up to sun down seven days a week always focused on making the rodeo program better. He led by example and that's not to say he was perfect; but, he lived his life everyday with an effort of perfection. I may not have fully appreciated at the time; but as I grew older, I realized how much it impressed upon me the virtues of what makes a good leader and, more importantly, a good man.

There was one semester where I had a class conflict that wouldn't allow me to practice in the evenings with the team. He met me in the practice pen at 5:30 am to open the chute and untie for me. That's the kind of coach he was. If he knew you wanted it, he would do everything in his power to help you succeed.

My time at UTM was a pivotal time in my life. I made some good friends, met some great people and had more fun than I could have imagined. It didn't take me long to regret not attending UTM as an undergrad! But my time there prepared me well to move on into the industry that held most of my interest at the time.

Within a few months of graduating from UTM with my MBA, I had secured a position with Daytona International Speedway managing sponsorship and promotional partnerships for one of the premier sports properties in the world. It was my dream job! And I owe a good portion of that opportunity to UTM. It may sound surprising, but a lot of the grassroots experience I gained while helping promote the annual UTM Spring Rodeo helped me spread my wings in the sports marketing world. It was a great place to work and gave me the opportunity to work with amazing professionals and extremely successful organizations.

I spent about four years at Daytona before getting a bit homesick. My younger brother was preparing to enter high school, three of my grandparents were still around and my wife and I were heavily considering starting a family. So, I had to make the difficult decision of leaving my dream job to be closer to family back in the Buckeye State. It was tough; but looking back, I don't regret it one bit.

In 2009 my wife (Arica) and I moved back to Ohio and I started roping again. This was a huge part of my life that was painfully missing during my time in Florida. I was happy to have that hobby back in my life.

But more importantly, I was happy to be back close to a family I loved.

I was able to spend precious time with my Grandmother in the last few months of her life. I got to be the big brother that I always wanted to be but found it hard to accomplish from 1000 miles away. I was able to deepen the bond between my grandfather and myself. Arica and I were even able to bring a baby boy into this world in October of 2012 (who would take on my grandfather's name, Dugan.) What made this even more special was the fact that my grandfather got to meet and hold his great grandson a few weeks prior to passing away. Most recently, we were blessed with a daughter (Zoe) in December of 2015 and I think our family is complete!

Arica is an elementary reading specialist in a great school district in Central Ohio and I have a position with a well-established business technology firm as a software sales consultant. We are as happy as ever just rolling along through life thankful for all of the opportunities we've been afforded along the way that have led us to this point...not the least of which is UTM.

Coach Luthi remembers, "Zak was a talented roper but one of his strongest attributes was his great attitude. He also had a strong work ethic and was willing to learn and do the extra to put himself in a position to reach his goals. When you combine those traits it was easy to have confidence that he would excel in the area for our team and be successful out of the arena also. I really enjoyed having him here was a team member and graduate assistant. It's no surprise he's done well professionally and most importantly, is a good man who loves his family."





# UPCOMING SEASON

This marks the 20th year that Coach Luthi has been at the helm for the UTM rodeo team. The Skyhawks enter the year with a lot of experience and depth on the women's team, but will be counting on a lot of new faces on the men's side. Coach Luthi is confident that "we'll have people step up and compete well for us this year. We have the ability, if we just do our part by working hard and keeping a positive attitude, we will have a good year."

## OZARK REGION SCHEDULE

### 2016-2017

Missouri Valley College (Marshall, Missouri)	September 22, 23, 24 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
University of West Alabama (Livingston, Alabama)	September 29, 30, Oct, 1 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
Murray State University #1 (Murray, Kentucky)	October 13, 14 Thursday, Friday
Murray State University #2 (Murray, Kentucky)	October 15, 16 Saturday, Sunday
Southern Arkansas University (Magnolia, Arkansas)	November 3, 4, 5 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
East Mississippi Community College (West Point, Mississippi)	TBA Thursday, Friday, Saturday
University of Arkansas - Monticello (Monticello, Arkansas)	March 30, 31 April 1 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
University of Tennessee at Martin (Martin, Tennessee)	April 6, 7, 8 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
Northwest Mississippi Comm. College (Sentaobia Mississippi)	April 20, 21, 22 Thursday, Friday, Saturday
Cossatot Community College (Texarkana, Arkansas)	April 27, 28, 29 Thursday, Friday, Saturday

Keep up with UT Martin Rodeo results on [www.utmsports.com](http://www.utmsports.com)





# UT MARTIN RODEO BOOSTER CLUB

## WINTER BARREL RACING SERIES

UTM AG PAVILION ~ MARTIN, TN

September 16-17

October 21-22

November 4-5

January 13-14

\*\*\*\*TN IBRA APPROVED FOR ALL 4 WEEKENDS\*\*\*\*

**Friday Night:** Training Barrels 6:00-8:00 PM ~ Classes to follow

**Saturday:** Training Barrels 1:30-4:30 PM ~ Classes to follow

	<u>Entry Fee</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Added Money *</u> <u>Saturday</u>
Training Barrels	\$5		
Kiddie Barrels	\$6		
Open 4D Barrels	\$25	\$100	\$300
Youth 3D Barrels (18&Under)	\$20	\$50	\$100
Masters Class (40&OVER)	\$15	\$0	\$0
Adult 3D Barrels (19-39)	\$20	\$50	\$100

*Entry fees include \$3 timer fee*

*\*\* Min. entries for added money \*\**

**Friday** ~ Youth & Adult barrels – 25 or more ; Open Barrels – 50 or more

**Saturday** ~ Youth Barrels – 25 or more ; Adult Barrels – 25 or more

*\*Open – 50 or more (\$500 added for more than 100 entries)*

**\*\*OPEN Barrels can Roll Over to Youth, Masters, & Adult Classes\*\***

**- \$5 gate fee paid at entry**

- Series awards will be giving on points for Friday & Saturday combined
- Points to top 10 places in each division each day. Payback based on numbers of entries in the class.
- Re-run for timer malfunction only \*Refunds for injury to horse or rider only \* no refunds after class begins
- Stalls are \$25/per night. Includes 1 bag of shavings – one horse per stall ; Electric RV hook-ups are \$25
- No overnight tie outs

For More Information Please Contact: Katie White (270) 627-1031 or Jamie White (731) 693-6315

Negative coggins required for all horses, State of TN requires health papers on all out of state horses.



# ATHLETE ORIENTATION

Each year the day before classes start, all the Skyhawk athletes have physicals in the afternoon and gather in the evenings for a meal and words from the UT Martin athletic staff.



Top-left: Skyhawk Athletes Orientation; Top-right: Alexandra Handcock and Holly Kalua hold up this year's t-shirt, Skyhawk Go. "Gotta Beat 'em all."



# SKYHAWKS ATHLETE KICKOFF DINNER

The annual Athletics Kickoff Dinner is a great night where UTM student-athletes eat dinner with local community members and supporters of the Skyhawks. It's a fun night and this year featured "speed dating". Athletes from different teams were assigned to tables with fans of the program who hosted a table. They had a chance to interact with them and their families, as well as athletes from other sports on campus. After 10 minutes the athletes moved to a new table assignment and got to meet a new host and new group of student-athletes. They switched again a third time. The new format was a hit and a super opportunity to learn more than just a few stats about your favorite Skyhawk player.



Above Right: McKenna Cox, Casey Allen and graduate assistant Ben Walker; Center: Coach John Luthi and Clay Tilley; Left: 2016 Skyhawk Kick off dinner with Rachel, Dominique, Kelsey, Kenzley and Kylie; Below: 2016 Rodeo Team.



# REMEMBER THIS HANDOUT...

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friend tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye.

As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives." He looked at me and said, "Hey thanks!" There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude.

I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before.

We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes. We hung all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "Damn boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!" He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to

be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class.

I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak. Graduation day, I saw Kyle.

He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than me and all the girls loved him! Boy, sometimes I was jealous.

Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach ... but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment.

I saw his Mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions.

With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others.



# FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

Fellowship of Christian Athletes and UT Martin Athletics combine to host the annual FCA and UTM Sports Extravaganza.



*Above-left: UTM Cowboy, Tucker Kail teaches correct roping technique; Center: Rodeo booster club member and former UTM bull rider, David Vowell, works on correct bull riding form; Right: Participant waiting their turn; Bottom: Rodeo participants with team members Tucker Kail, Hannah Mosley, and Coach Luthi. Photos courtesy of Dr. Clinton Smith.*



# \*\*\*FOLLOW THE TEAM!\*\*\*

With the new school year upon us and the start of the rodeo season approaching quickly, we have several options for you to follow the team as they compete for a chance to qualify as a team and as individuals for the College Finals in Casper next June.



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## SOYBEAN FESTIVAL PARADE 2016





