

NAMES: Rope said he's proud of his heritage and name

Continued from 1A

Stran Smith won the world champion title in 2008. One of his cousins is Tuf Cooper, a three-time world champion with a uniquely western name of his own who is also competing at Round-Up this year.

Most of Stetson's family has western-inspired names, and he's thought a bit about what he will name his children if he has them. But he doesn't share his ideas with the family.

"They'd totally steal 'em," he said.

Rope Myers knows quite a bit about being named for rodeo roots.

Rope is a 2001 world champion steer wrestler from Longview, Texas, and the oldest child of Butch Myers, world champion in 1980. Because of his big win that year, Butch committed to naming his youngest son Cash. He'd already named his daughter and middle child "Tygh" (pronounced "Tie").

"It's 'cause you rope the calf, tie the calf and win the cash," Rope explained. "The names are all intentionally rodeo-themed."

Rope said he's proud of his heritage and name, but doesn't attribute it to his or his brother's success — Cash Myers won \$21,045 at the Round-Up during his all-around title campaigns in 2005, 2007 and 2008.

For team roping partners



Staff photo by E.J. Harris
Stetson Vest of Childress, Texas, center, watches calf roping during slack on Tuesday at the Pendleton Round-Up.

Speed Williams and Rich Skelton, the victorious connotations were purely coincidental. They went by what they preferred. Speed, who is from Jacksonville, Fla., goes by his middle name; his first is Ken. His partner, who is from Llano, Texas, shortened his name from Richard.

Rich denies the names had any influence on their rodeo careers, though they did sell merchandise with the phrase "To get Rich, you gotta have Speed."

It's clever, but also true. They won eight straight world championship titles from 1997 to 2004 and took the Round-Up title in 1997.

The 2002 steer roping world champion, Buster Record Jr. also blames coincidence for his winning moniker. His birth certifi-

cate reads "Tommy Junior Record." In the time since that was chosen, however, he's been known solely by his nickname: Buster.

"That's the only thing I've ever gone by," he said. "I don't have a clue why my parents called me that. I think they just liked it." It's even Buster on his Social Security card.

Though it created a lot of conversation and potentially attracted a few more sponsors, the cowboy from Buffalo, Okla., agreed with the others that his name had no impact on his success. That success included a Round-Up steer roping record of 10.1 seconds, set in 1999, that still stands.

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Ashlee Hatch, a massage therapist from Idaho, gives a full-body massage to Sadie Garner, Blue Mountain Community College softball player and friend. The bulk of Hatch's clients are rodeo athletes.

VENDORS: Ashlee Hatch caters to rodeo athletes aching after competition

Continued from 1A

trailers that surrounded the zipline.

A Pendleton High School graduate, Porter moved away when he joined the Marine Corps and eventually settled in Yuma, Arizona.

Now a superintendent for a commercial construction company, Porter decided to buy the zipline three weeks ago and scrambled to obtain all the proper permits and licenses.

"As a superintendent, I know how to pull things together," he said.

Porter took two weeks off work and brought his wife and family back home for the Round-Up, making the zipline available to the public for the first time.

The whole family is involved in the operation: Porter's wife, Sabrina, handles customer intake, Porter harnesses people onto the zipline and the kids get free rides when business slows down.

Porter acknowledged the financial risk he took when he bought the zipline, but he

hopes it will pay off with an even larger-scale dream: an indoor playground business.

Just a block away from the Round-Up Arena, the Jones family is trying to figure out if their shop is a good fit for rodeo week.

Mike and Becky Jones run Mikes Antler Stuff, which is situated beside a taco truck, lemonade stand and jerky booth in the small parking lot for The Muffler Shop on Southwest Court Avenue.

The wares Mikes Antler Stuff sells are self-explanatory: products made of deer and elk antlers, mainly chandeliers and lamps.

A retired wildland firefighter, Mike said the business evolved from a hobby and he now sells his antler products from Pendleton to customers all over the country through word of mouth.

The Joneses said it's a lot of work to put together a Round-Up booth and the locals often balk at the product prices, which range from \$5 to \$1,000, thinking they could do it themselves.

"Go online and see the

prices on (the antlers)," Mike said. "It'd scare you."

While most vendors primarily cater to tourists, Country Road Massage is after a different clientele: cowboys.

Camped out in a lot near Club 24 Fitness, Country Road provides deep tissue massage to rodeo contestants looking to recover from the aches and pains of their sport.

Based out of Dayton, Idaho, Country Road owner Ashlee Hatch said she's been a masseuse for 11 years but only started taking her act on the road last year.

In that time, Hatch has provided massages to cowboys in Cheyenne, Wyoming, Ellensburg, Washington and Caldwell, Idaho and more.

Hatch said she aims to give her clients a sense of familiarity and consistency instead of having to seek out an unknown masseuse in the town they're competing in.

This is her first time in Pendleton, but Hatch knows what to do.

"This isn't my first rodeo," she said.

MOTE: Quit school at 17 to follow his dreams of competing full-time

Continued from 1A

He and hundreds of others at the rodeo that day felt an emotional surge of patriotism.

"It was electric," Mote said. "That place had more energy than any other place I'd ever been."

The memory joins scores of sweet moments dotting Mote's 22-year professional rodeo career. The cowboy, who retired recently at age 41 to concentrate on horse training, won't make it this year to the Round-Up, a rodeo he missed only twice as a professional bareback rider.

Mote, known for his unruffled demeanor as he climbs aboard high-octane broncs, will leave his mark. The four-time world champion competed in 15 consecutive Wrangler National Finals Rodeos. He won Pendleton in 2012 and earned numerous seconds and thirds.

The Culver cowboy, who now lives in Llano, Texas, rode his first bareback horse at age 15 after paying eight dollars to ride at a practice pen in Powell Butte, Oregon. He climbed aboard a horse named Squeak.

"The horse basically just ran," he said. "He barely bucked. He wouldn't have jumped over a pop can."

Nevertheless, "I was hooked," he said. "That's all I wanted to do."

Even as a teenager, Mote was big on setting goals for himself.

"Before I could really ride, I had the goal of being a multiple-time world champion and going to the NFR more than a dozen times," he said. "I meant it when I wrote it down and I believed it."

At age 17, he told some of his teachers about his dream. He remembers them telling him he would never make a living. He ignored them, quitting school to compete full-time. Over the years, he met his original goals and more.

Professional roper Mike Beers, who once competed on the Blue Mountain Community College rodeo team, is a pal. They met when Mote showed up for a team roping event at Beers' home arena in Powell Butte.

"Bobby rode good, but he had no idea what team roping was," Beers recalled, with a guffaw. "It was a little scary."

Beers tutored Mote, teaching him the finer



EO file photo
Bobby Mote of rides for 83 points at the 2013 Pendleton Round-Up.

"Before I could really ride, I had the goal of being a multiple-time world champion and going to the NFR more than a dozen times. I meant it when I wrote it down and I believed it."

— Bobby Mote, four-time world champion

points of roping and in time Mote got it. Eventually, the two men competed together in team roping. They won a buckle at the Wainwright Stampede in Alberta and earned their way into the Canadian National Finals Rodeo. They never got the chance to compete, however, because a few weeks later Mote punctured his pancreas at a rodeo in San Juan Capistrano, California. The injury joined a long list of others, including a sprained neck and broken collar bone suffered when his bronc tried to jump over another horse.

"I pay for it every morning when I wake up," Mote said, laughing.

Beers, who now lives in British Columbia, has suffered his own share of injuries. One came not during a rodeo, but at Mote's Culver ranch in 2007, a time when Beers and his son Brandon sat atop the world standings for team roping. Beers was putting one of Mote's horses (a previously gentle horse that Mote's daughter rode in junior rodeos) through its paces for a potential buyer when the horse dropped its head and kicked up its back legs. Beers banged his pelvis hard against the saddle horn and went airborne. The impact broke his scapula in half and fractured his pelvis. Mote, knowing his buddy didn't have adequate insurance, put on a fundraiser and raised \$25,000.

The Pendleton Round-Up is a favorite of

both men. Mote described the rodeo as "tough to win."

"Pendleton was always exciting — no doubt about that," Mote said. "You never know what to expect. There are more conditions (such as the grass and the size of the arena) that impact what horses do. A so-so horse may come to Pendleton and buck like crazy. You always had a chance."

Mote said, since bareback is the first event, he loved watching the place start from dead silence for the opening ceremony to crazy exuberance as the rodeo kicked into gear.

"The place would light up," he said.

Mote said he wants to go out on top instead of after his "expiration date." He will miss the adrenaline, the camaraderie and the pride in seeing a plan unfold, but now it's time to chase a new dream.

In March, he took a position with Reliance Ranches, a quarter horse racing program in Texas and Oklahoma. He describes his new job as "repurposing racehorses" that are done with their racing careers, but can be transformed into ranch horses or mounts for barrel racers or ropers.

As he moves forward, Mote doesn't spend time second-guessing his decision to quit rodeo.

"No regrets," he said. "I'll miss it, but it was a chapter in my life."

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