



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Rodeo phenomenon, Hanley "Noodle" Miller dismounts his horse during a successful run during the tie down roping event at the Cayuse Junior Rodeo held at the Harley Tucker Memorial arena in Joseph on June 15-16. Miller won the "All-Around-Cowboy" award, the top award at the event.

'Noodle' Miller ready to hit the rodeo big-time

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Rodeo legends Trevor Brazile and Derek Kolbaba better move over. Local rodeo cowboy, Hanley "Noodle" Miller is breathing down your necks because he wants that All-Around-Cowboy buckle. Miller, 12, has already got a good start on the path, as he's earned his way into a slot at the National Junior High Finals Rodeo, held in Huron, S.D. later this month.

The multi-talented Miller is following in the footsteps of his idol, Brazile, who has won an astounding 14 "All-Around" titles in his storied career. He is also following in the large rodeo footprints of older sister, Haley, and older brother, Hadley.

The young cowboy, just headed into seventh grade, qualified in several events: Team roping, ribbon roping, breakaway roping and goat tying.

Hanley, who acquired the nickname, "Noodle," from his curly hair is a polite young man with a man's handshake and dressed every inch the cowboy he is, including his battered straw hat.

Miller is a Wallowa County native and said he pretty much grew up on horseback. He still gets plenty of horseback time as his family has its own horse ranch, the "Sliding M" Ranch. The family also manages the Fence Creek Ranch out on Zumwalt Prairie.

The cowboy started to rodeo at the age of eight, inspired by Brazile, and even at 12, he takes his sport seriously.

"I want to do it for a living," he said. Asked for his ultimate goal: "I want to make it to the NFR (National Finals Rodeo)." As much as he likes Brazile, Miller said he'd like to break the older cowboy's marks.

Miller competes in only one other sport: basketball. That makes sense, because he competes in so many events in rodeo. Asked to name them, he lists team roping, breakaway roping, calf roping, ribbon roping, goat tying and chute dogging. The last event is similar to bulldogging.

Rodeo rules don't allow Miller to compete in bulldogging from a horse because of his young age. Instead, the sport is performed from the bucking chutes. It's not his favorite event though.



Ellen Morris Bishop

"Noodle" Miller expertly heels a steer in the 2018 Chief Joseph Days Ranch Rodeo.

"Calf roping and team roping are my two favorites," he said. "I don't know if I could choose between them." Rough stock riding is not in the picture. "When I was young, I rode it, but I didn't like it - I'll stick to my horses."

Speaking of horses, Miller is the proud owner of Capone, a 13-year-old quarter horse. Miller is also the owner of four, count 'em, four trophy saddles, including a Sloan and two Double-J saddles.

As it stands, Miller will head out to South Dakota on June 20 for 12 days of rip-snorting action.

Greg Seufer, who works with all the Miller children as a sort of stand-in coach, is impressed with the young cowboy. He noted Miller's work ethic as among the best he's ever seen and isn't surprised that Miller qualified.

"He qualified at the top end," he said. "He's not going for the fun of it. He's got the points going in to finish at the top."

One thing Seufer noticed is the boundless energy Miller displays in pursuit of his dreams and his focus.

"He'll go a long ways as long as there's enough fuel to keep him going,"

Seufer said. "There's no lack of energy."

While Miller likes school, the sport does cause him to miss the occasional day, especially during the latter part of the school year and even the first part, if the season is still on. His desire to make good at the sport he loves leaves him little free time, although he doesn't seem to mind.

"I practice every day," he said. I practice most of my events - calf roping, team roping, every day and ride horses. That's about it". At the same time, he isn't allowed to shirk ranch duties. Like the rest of the family, he pitches in to do whatever needs to be done to keep the ranch going.

As local youth rodeos are somewhat scarce, Miller does a lot of traveling. He competes as far away as Prineville and also hits Pendleton, La Grande and Milton-Freewater, which is his favorite.

"It has good ground and they have nice steers there," he said. "It's not dusty."



Hanley Miller, when he's not horseback.
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