

Setback Just Briefly Slows Top High School Calf Roper

Practice and practice and more practice make a winner.

But, the real champions are those who battle unforeseeable setbacks, and still come out on top.

"I rope every day, try to run 50 to 60 head practice cattle, and it pays off," admitted Landon Koehn, Salina.

Ranking first in calf roping standings at the end of the fall run of the Kansas High School Rodeo Association, Koehn said, "Then, I was practicing team roping after the first spring rodeo, when my horse started bucking, I came off and broke my left arm when I landed."



Dismounting from Scooter at the Plainville Rodeo last summer_ Landon Koehn of Salina shows his championship form in calf roping.

Dreams seemed shattered instantly, but the 18-year-old admits being fortunate it wasn't his roping arm, and that surgery wasn't required.

"Still, I couldn't compete at several rodeos which took me down in the standings," Koehn said.

Despite weakness and soreness, the cowboy was soon in the practice pen.

Determination combined with skill took the roper back up to lead the standings.

At the last rodeo, I was first one day and second the other, so I'm at the top again. But, it's still really tight. I'll have to do good at the finals in order to win the state," Koehn conceded.

Of course, the top four in the yearend standings of the Kansas High School Rodeo Finals, at the ExpoCentre in Topeka, June 1 through 5, qualify to compete at the National High School Rodeo Finals, advertised on WIBW, The BIG 94.5 Country, Country Legends 106.9 KTPK, and promoted on WibwNewsNow, and the Kansas Agriculture Network.

So, Koehn's chances of that qualification are fairly certain, but being a senior means it'll be his only chance to be a state champion.

Koehn has qualified for the nationals two years in calf roping, as a freshman and a junior. "I was fourth in the state both times, but also qualified last year in team roping, third in the state," explained Koehn, who did not follow the high school circuit as a sophomore.

While his family has been in farming and ranching, they really didn't have background in rodeo.

"But, when I was eight, Dad (Chad) started taking me and my brother, Jess, who's a year younger, to some junior rodeos," Koehn reflected. "We ran barrels and poles and entered the dummy roping."

Rodeo adrenalin increased, so in a couple of years, Koehn went to a calf roping school conducted by Jeff Copenhaver in south Texas. "That really got me going, and we started going to a junior rodeo about every week," he said.

With three yearend qualifications to the National Junior High Rodeo Finals, Koehn was the state all-around champion as an eighth grader competing in ribbon roping, team roping, and goat tying along with calf roping.

He also tried chute dogging in junior high competition, ending fifth one year.

The right horse is essential to winning, and Koehn feels fortunate to have his 17-year-old sorrel cow bred mare appropriately named Roper.

"We got Roper when she was just a two-year-old and started out running barrels and poles on her. Then, we sent her to a roping trainer for about a month," Koehn reflected.

"Roper did all right, but the more we roped on her, the better she got. I've roped on a lot of horses, and we have a lot of horses, but Roper's still one of the best there is," Koehn insisted.

Little comes ahead of practice time at the Koehn Ranch. "I usually saddle three team roping horses and two or three calf roping horses a day," Koehn said.

Typically, he'll run from 30 to 45 team roping steers, while roping and tying down 20 to 30 calves.

That requires about 20 head of rope horses, and multiples that cattle. "We rope outside most of the time, but if the weather's bad, we have an inside lane to rope calves," Koehn said.

Tying is a high percentage of calf roping success, and Koehn spends hours perfecting his skills on live calves.



Riding his horse called Simba_ Landon Koehn of Salina heads a steer for his heeler Chandler Comfort in the team roping in a high school rodeo earlier this year at Lakin.

"We put a calve on the rope at the end of a post, to practice flanking, and tying, which seems more realistic and works better for me that just tying a practice dummy calf," Koehn said.

Roping is a family deal as his Dad and brother are team ropers, practicing and competing, too. "I generally compete as a header in team roping," Koehn said. "Jess and I have roped together in the past, but Chandler Comfort of Colby has been heeling for me this year."

They're tied for third in state team roping standings at present, looking toward a national finals qualification.

Chad Koehn competes in amateur rodeos and jackpot team roping, while Jess has roped calves, but now sticks to team roping.

His record has made Landon Koehn sought after by a number of colleges to be on their rodeo teams. "I'm going to attend Ranger College in Texas, which has a top two-year-program, and then maybe transfer to Tarleton State at Stephenville," the roper said.

"I intend to rope all of my life, and also be involved in the Koehn Ranch operations," he said.

First things first though: The state finals; National High School Rodeo Finals, July 17-23, Gillette, Wyoming; college rodeo titles; and presumably the pro ranks to follow.

Padre Says:

"Everybody talks about the weather, but there's really nothing anybody can do about it."



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Frank J. Buchman
Marketing Consultant

Direct: 785-228-7259 Cell: 785-499-3063

E-mail: frank.buchman@wibwradio.com

Website: www.frankjbuchman.com

PO Box 1818
1210 SW Executive Drive, Topeka, Kansas 66615

