

THE ATHLETES

Learning from Their Hero

Central Oregon has become a hotbed of world-class bareback riding talent, and much of this success can be traced to the mentorship of one man: Clint Corey.



Jason Havens / PRCA Photo

by Kathy Oxborrow, for
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To hear Clint Corey tell it, "rodeoing is easy."

The 48 year-old former world champion bareback rider, now retired, credits his success and that of his students to the "conservative" style with which he rode. He now teaches this style to aspiring rodeo riders.

Conservative isn't usually a term associated with riding bucking horses for a living, but his methods certainly seem to be working. Three of the Central Oregon students he's mentored are headed to the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association's finals in Las Vegas in December. Only 15 advance to the finals so having three of the 15 from Central Oregon says a lot about that "conservative" style he favors.

These three bareback riders are Bobby Mote, 34, from Culver, who's a three-time world champion; Prineville's Jason Havens, 33, who's rated 11th in the world; and at only 21, Steven Peebles, from Redmond, is in 10th place in the world rankings.

Corey said when he started competing, there weren't any schools or clinics that taught you how to stay on a bucking horse. He learned from the school of hard knocks.

"You get on, you get bucked off," he said.

After Corey made the finals a few times, he wanted to give back to the younger guys working their way up the circuit, so he started offering clinics. He wanted to help them progress faster than he had learning on his own.

The would-be wranglers started out on a

bucking machine, then a non-bucking live horse before getting on a real bucking horse.

Havens, Mote and Peebles started participating in Corey's clinics when they were in high school. As they grew into the sport, they all began to travel to competitions together, entering the same events.

They said they didn't compete against each other; they competed against the horse.

"There's a lot of sports where you don't get to meet your heroes, the top guys in the world, so for us to be friends with him and travel with him, that's huge," said Havens of his relationship with Corey.

Peebles, who represents the next generation on the mentorship tree, agreed.

"It's a big thing," he said. "He's one of the biggest guys there is in rodeo."

Corey said he's benefited as well. His students' youthfulness and enthusiasm kept him going.

"It helped me to improve my riding by helping them,"

he said.

Asked to define the conservative riding style that's produced so many successful bareback riders, Corey said it's sitting square on your horse, not flapping around and being in time with your horse.

"Some guys are just wild and don't know how to get in time with a bucking horse and do things correctly," he said.

Corey pointed out that the "wild guys" aren't consistent in their scoring. They can get a high mark one day and fall way below



Photo by Nicole Werner

MEET THE ATHLETES



the next.

All of his trainees have learned how to keep their scores consistent. They may not be the top scorer at any one event, but the points add up over time and lead to the finals.

They've also learned another lesson from Corey: how to give back to the next generation. Havens knows there are young kids looking up to him like he did Corey, and now he's mentoring them, paying it forward.

Ryan Gray (NO. 1 - WORLD), BAREBACK

Mote, Havens and Corey will put their conservative styles to the test against the best in the world at this year's circuit finals. So far for 2010, that best goes by the name of Ryan Gray, a six-time Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (WNFR) qualifier in bareback.



Boasting \$159,024 in earnings this year, Havens has been champion or co-champion in 12 rodeos this year including the Dodge National Circuit Finals Rodeo in Pocatello, ID, the RodeoHouston Shootout Round, the 100th Pendleton Rodeo and the Sisters Rodeo. His victories include a pair of 90-point rides.

Gray, who first got involved in rodeo when he was just 5 years old, is the middle of three brothers — Corey and Kyle — who compete in ProRodeo.

Gray travels with Mote, Havens and Brian Bain (of Culver) in a group they call "The Pride." He takes part in a video blog by the same name about his travel adventures with the group, which is featured on RodeoUp.com.

Charly Crawford (NO. 5 - WORLD) &

Russell Cardoza

(NO. 4 - WORLD), TEAM ROPING

Partners Charly Crawford of Prineville and Russel Cardoza of Terrebonne will display the

quickness, skills and teamwork of one of the world's top team roping tandems at this year's circuit finals.

Crawford, currently rated No. 5 in the world as the header of the tandem, boasts three wins in 2010 with earnings totally \$88,200. The five-time WNFR qualifier finished seventh in the world standings in 2009. He was also named PRCA Team Roping (Header) Rookie of the Year in 1998.

Rated No. 4 in the world as the team's heeler, Russel Cardoza boasts six wins and \$90,051 in earnings this year. A two-time WNFR qualifier, Cardoza notched a win (with partner B.J. Campbell) at the 2009 Dodge Nationals Circuit Finals in Pocatello, ID.

Cardoza's father, Russ, competed in rodeo, and most of the Cardoza family ropes. Russel started roping when he was just 3 years old.

Brenda Mays

(NO. 4 - WORLD),

BARREL

RACING

The last three years of barrel racing at the Dodge Columbia River ProRodeo Circuit Finals has been dominated by one woman: Brenda Mays of Terrebonne.

The three-time WNFR qualifier and current No. 4 barrel racer in the world, Mays won the circuit finals title each of the last three years. She currently sits in the world rankings with \$104,408 in earnings.



Rodeo — and the Columbia River ProRodeo Circuit Finals — has been a part of the Mays' life for three generations. Brenda Mays followed in the footsteps of her mother, Lynne, who won the circuit finals barrel racing competition in 1975.

Brenda's grandfather competed in every male event offered in rodeo, and her great grandfather had a stock contract.

Mays first qualified for the WNFR in 2007, a year in which she finished ninth in the world standings.

Trevor Knowles

(NO. 5 - WORLD),

STEER

WRESTLING

High school wrestler-to-steer wrestler certainly

isn't the most natural of transitions, but it's worked just fine for Trevor Knowles of Mount Vernon, who's rated No. 5 in the world.

The seven-time WNFR qualifier will display his prowess at this year's circuit finals. Knowles has earned four wins so far in 2010, and he set an arena record of 3 seconds in the second round of the Justin Boots Championships in Omaha, NE.

At the Columbia River ProRodeo Circuit Finals, Knowles earned the honor of steer wrestling champion in 2004, 2007 and 2009, and all-around champion in 2005 and 2007.

The Knowles name is well-known in the PRCA, with his uncle, Buck, a four-time NFR qualifier and rodeo analyst, and his father, Jeff, a PRCA member and stock contractor.

