

Riding With a Memory



Since childhood, Kimberly Lindsey has dreamed of doing what only the best competitors of the horse world have managed to do – take home a trophy of gold with a belt buckle to match, engraved with the words “World Champion.”

“Just like every little girl, I’ve ridden horses all my life, and that’s what we do if for, is to have one of those big gold buckles that says ‘World Champion’ on it,” Lindsey said, who recently won the Working Cow Horse world championship at the 2013 American Quarter Horse Association’s (AQHA) Adequan Select World Show, held annually in Amarillo, Texas.

A lifelong fixture in the equestrian world and director of the Texas Tech Equestrian Center, Lindsey

could have never imagined her path to the winner’s circle would be guided by her son when she spotted a large, two-year-old buckskin gelding as she and longtime friend, Kris Wilson, browsed the sale prospects at the annual Caprock Rancher’s sale in 2008 in Clarendon, Texas.

“Reno was an incredible looking two-year-old, and we both fell in love with him,” said Wilson.

The pair didn’t have a chance to see how the gelding worked under-saddle, and were warned by several friends not to buy the horse because his rider previously had issues showing him during the riding demonstration before the sale commenced.

“A lot of people saw the incident and were surprised Kim and I were still interested in him,” Wilson said.

“They told me he had issues,” Lindsey said, “but he kind of caught my eye. I told Kris, ‘that one will make you famous, Kris. We gotta buy him.’”

Lindsey and Wilson had the steal of the sale with a horse others in the crowd had written off as a fighter.

Lindsey took Reno home to her ranch in Aspermont, Texas, and didn’t waste any time trying out her purchase. It was then Lindsey’s teenage son, Zinn, began forging a relationship with the horse that would one day take him to the winner’s circle on multiple occasions.

“Zinn got on him and kind of worked a cow on him, and sure enough,” Lindsey said, “he was real good one way and he would kind of run off the other way.”

In July of that year, Wilson took over Reno’s training and introduced the gelding to the show ring the following year.

“He is the type of horse that could have been an NCHA (National Cutting Horse Association) caliber cutting horse,” Wilson said. “You don’t find very many horses as gifted physically as he is.”

One year later, Wilson and Reno returned to Clarendon for the 2009 Caprock Rancher’s Futurity, where they emerged winners, besting second place by 40 points.

The pair’s success continued for the rest of that year and most of 2010, until the Ranch Horse Association of America (RHAA) Western Heritage Classic in Abilene, Texas.

“We qualified for the RHAA finals as a four-year-old and were leading the competition by 60 points

going into the finals, and I missed my cow,” Wilson said.

After the Western Heritage, Lindsey became Reno’s sole owner, buying Wilson out of his half.

Reno’s success in the show ring didn’t stop there.

Zinn Lindsey stepped into the saddle after Wilson, and the

“That horse will make
you famous.”

pair continued to astound judges at shows across the state.

Every parent hopes see their children succeed in something they are passionate about. Lindsey and her husband, Matt, were able to see their hopes met time after time as their son rode his way through the winner's circle and into the American Quarter Horse Association history books after he won the first Ranching Heritage Challenge in January 2012, in Fort Worth.

On May 12, 2012, Zinn and Reno returned to Abilene to compete at the Western Heritage Classic, where they captured yet another championship win in the Junior Division. This would be Zinn's final championship.

On the morning of May 15, Lindsey's world changed forever when she recieved a call from Matt. Just three days after his success at Western Heritage, Zinn was killed in a car accident on his way to school. He was 18-years-old and just 10 days from graduation.

In a few short years, Matthew Zinn Lindsey blazed a trail through the ranch horse world and in his passing, left behind a legacy of hard work and success, both in the show ring and at home on the ranch, and it is one that will continue to shine for generations to follow.

Anyone would find it difficult to recover from such a traumatic loss, and Lindsey was no different.

"The first time I rode Reno, I couldn't even change leads on him, and Zinn always made it look so easy," Lindsey said, with a soft smile quirking her lips. "I remember at the Heritage that year, when Zinn went to do his first rundown, his rope strap came undone, so his rope was dragging, and he was just coiling it up for the next rundown. So the first time I got on Reno, I couldn't change leads, I couldn't get him to stop and I thought 'I can't even ride this horse.'"

When Lindsey returned to work in July of that year, she said she had finally made a decision.

"I finally made up my mind that I just had to go ride him," Lindsey said.

And that is exactly what she did. Lindsey set her heart on achieving her dream of winning a world championship, though now she was riding for more than just herself – she was riding for the memory of her son.

The determination to attempt a world championship trophy is something few possess, and takes the support of both human and horse. Lindsey said she felt as if she had nothing to lose by taking her shot. "What's there to lose except just go for it? If you don't win, you're just where you were." Lindsey said.

With the love and support of family and friends, as well as the help of AQHA Professional Horseman Don Murphy, Lindsey and Reno finally found themselves at the show every competitive horseman hopes to one day have a chance to compete in this past August: The AQHA Select World Show.

"Everyone said it was just the funnest show you'll ever go to, and it really was. It was first class," Lindsey said.

On August 25, after a successful ride in the preliminaries the day

before, the horse and rider who had overcome so much in the past year to earn their time in the spot light, were the last team to ride in the working cow horse finals.

There was not a dry eye to be found in the Amarillo National Center as Lindsey and Reno trotted out of the arena, with a final score of 440, besting the second place competition by seven-and-a-half points.

"After Kim completed the reining work of the run, I knew she had it won, as Reno is so good in the cow work," Wilson said, who was in the crowd that day. "Kim is my best friend and the college and department are blessed to have someone as talented and dedicated as her at the equestrian center."

For Lindsey, her performance in the arena that day is a ride she did not

experience alone, and one she will certainly never forget.


"I was the 15th one to ride that day, and I just prayed that God would be with me and let Zinn ride with me," Lindsey said with tears in her eyes, "and it just felt like nothing I have ever done before." 



Photo Courtesy of Kim Lindsey

