



WILD RIDE



Wind turbines, toddlers, and championship cowboy buckles. For many, these items have nothing in common. For Texas Tech alumni Hunter and Bristi Cure, these items keep them on a “wild” ride.

Based in Dundee, Texas, the Cure family has a busy schedule. Hunter is a full-time professional rodeo cowboy, competing in the steer-wrestling event. Bristi manages the home front while he is away, while also maintaining her senior Business Management position at Invenergy. Invenergy is an alternative energy company with projects across the nation. Bristi serves as the bridge between these projects, mostly wind farms, and the landowners. Add Halli, their blonde haired, blue-eyed three-year-old, and Hayes, the one-year-old future steer wrestler himself, and you quickly see how “wild” comes into play.

Hunter and Bristi met while high school rodeoing and started dating their senior year. Hunter is originally from Electra, Texas, and attended Howard College in Big Springs, Texas, before transferring to Texas Tech. Bristi, from Spur, Texas, was a Red Raider rodeo team member her entire college career and the two continued their relationship throughout college. Bristi graduated with an Agricultural Communications Bachelor’s degree in 2005 and a Master’s in December of 2006. Hunter graduated with an Agriculture and Applied Economics degree in the spring of 2006. The two married that November.

Hunter paid his dues and made his big break in professional rodeo three years later, qualifying for his first Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2009. Only the top 15 cowboys and cowgirls in each event

qualify for the profitable Finals, based on money earned throughout the year. After a rough ten rounds, Hunter finished the year 11th in the standings.

The years 2010 to 2012 were growth years. Hunter attributes his 2013 qualification to refocusing in the practice pen, working more on himself and what he wasn’t doing to win.

“It was time to reboot and shift gears,” he said.

The gears certainly shifted as Hunter won \$65,007 and headed into the WNFR sitting seventh in the standings. He went on to dominate the Finals, winning two rounds and placing in five more. The 2013 World Championship title seemed certain for Dean Gorsuch, but when Dean missed his steer in Round 10, Hunter’s consistent week paid off, much to everyone’s surprise.

“It was a little bit surreal,” Hunter said. “It didn’t really feel like it happened, I didn’t know how that was going to shake out. Sometimes things work out and sometimes they don’t, but they definitely did there.”

The fire kept burning in 2014 and Hunter had one of the most lucrative winters possible in professional rodeo, plus winning \$100,000 at RFD-TV’s The American rodeo. In four months, he had won half the required winnings to qualify for the National Finals once again. Then, an athlete’s worst nightmare occurred.

Hunter mentioned having a sore back one day after practice. From there the pain only worsened. Add into this equation some hard hits in the arena, and Hunter struggled to walk, let alone wrestle 700-pound steers to the ground.



“In a matter of two months, he went from being a functional human being, to not even being able to stand up straight,” Bristi explained. “We were out of options.”

Hunter suffered an injury identical to that of Tony Romo. His disc between L4 and L5 vertebrae was bulged and pushing on his spinal cord. Hunter made the decision to undergo a microdiscectomy, in which the bulging portion of the disc is cut off. While Hunter had to miss the two largest rodeo months in the year (June and July), all was worth it as he had immediate pain relief.

Although not beneficial to rodeoing, Bristi attests that the injury, and having Hunter home during the summer of 2014, was a “God thing”. The 2013 World Championship allowed the Cures to pay off their debt, while The American win in 2014 allowed them to put a down payment on building a house. The deadline for completion was Thanksgiving, and construction was fully underway through the summer. Top that off with a pregnant Bristi expecting in July, and the Cure family plate was overflowing.

“We got lucky and everything worked out,” Bristi said. “It was nice to have him home where otherwise he wouldn’t have been.”

Enjoying his time at home, Hunter was also ready to hit the road again. Coming back earlier than recommended, Hunter was determined to get to the arena and prove to himself and those who doubted him that he would be at the NFR again sometime soon.

“I got the baby here and established, got the house squared away,” Hunter said. “It wasn’t bad that I was home last summer at all, but rodeo moves on and they tend to forget you’ve won anything if you’re not on TV time and time again.”

Hunter finished 2014 in the top 30. Considering most competitors hit at least 65 rodeos before the season closes on October 1, this was quite an impressive feat; but Hunter was determined to revisit the lights of Vegas, and when the 2015 season began, he couldn’t wait.

With an independent wife to keep things rolling at home, and more determination than ever to get back into the winner’s circle, Hunter hit the road hard, leaving home in the middle of May. The family flew to Calgary, Canada in July, to be together for a week, and he took a week off in August to be home. Juggling a rodeo career and fatherhood

is tough, but Hunter says it’s all about making the time you do have together count.


“It’s a balance,” he explains. “To be the best father that you can be, you have to give them attention when you are here. At the same time, we all have to work. There are a lot of balls up in the air and we just try not to drop them.”

You can imagine the Cure’s relief when the 2015 final standings came out with Hunter’s name in the number two position, earning over \$92,000. The family is excited to once again be in Las Vegas, this time with two kids in tow. It’ll be an interesting ten days especially for Bristi, who will be working the entire time from Vegas as her company begins construction on another wind farm in Texas. Thankful for the flexibility of her job, Hunter is also thankful to have a wife willing to go the extra mile and allow him to do what he loves.

“She’s the stable force that this whole thing pivots off of,” he explains of his wife of nine years.

Although their life seems to consist of short visits while Hunter is on the road, and fast food tailgate lunches when he’s home, the Cure family says they wouldn’t have it any other way. To some, they may seem crazy, but they consider themselves

fortunate.

“I think we’ve been really blessed,” Bristi explains. “I have a good job, we’re busy, but I don’t know that we would have it any other way. We’re doing ok in my book... even if I have to live four months without a husband.” 



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